

THE EASTERN ANTHROPOLOGIST

EDITOR : D. N. Majumdar

FOREIGN EDITOR : C. von. Fürer-Haimendorf

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THE EASTERN ANTHROPOLOGIST

(A Quarterly Record of Ethnography and Folk Culture)

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

We welcome the UNESCO pamphlet on The Significance of Racial Differences, by Dr G. M. Morant. The UNESCO has been grappling with the problem of race and racial prejudice and its efforts have focussed diametrically opposed views on the subject. We have, in a previous issue of the journal, pointed out the stalemate in our approach. Those who deny race differences or differences in mental life, oversimplify their task, while those who see significant differences find it difficult to substantiate their view points. It was necessary to have a scientific point of view, which would call a 'spade' a 'spade' and this has been put forward by Dr Morant. He says, 'there are racial differences in physical characters, but whether the situation is the same or not for mental characters is a question which cannot be answered definitely at present, mental characters being more difficult to define and assess, and none hitherto used being very satisfactory for the purpose of making racial comparison.'

Dr Morant continues further, 'No dogmatic statements regarding particular group distinctions in innate mental characters, can be satisfied at present.' Further, 'interpretation of the differences in terms of true racial distinctions is uncertain and it may be presumptuous to conclude that there probably are none. Negroes might well be found to be superior in some abilities.'

'In another way,' writes Dr Morant, 'the position for mental characters is not unlikely to be the same as that for physical characters. For the latter no racial population is found to be near the higher or lower extreme in many ways. One group may be outstanding for one character and one for another, and all groups are unexceptional in most respects. Group diversity of such a kind tends to equalise all peoples when a final summing up is made for all characters.' There will be maximum agreement on the conclusion he arrives at. 'Variety among populations would be a boon to humanity, if all had good opportunities to develop their potentialities' (*Ibid* p. 48). If all nations are determined to develop on their own lines, some would like to continue their traditional cultures, others would delink themselves from their moorings. If configurations are different, and there are natural reasons for being so, unity in diversity is more desirable than ironing out differences. While India finds her salvation in linking with her past, America is proud that she has no traditions and no social history.

'We can change, others cannot'. In such a welter of contradictions, Dr Morant's findings are of great significance. Throughout the essay, Dr Morant has struggled to maintain his scientific attitude, and if he has not played upto the expectations of 'levellers' he has put irrefragible evidence in support of his conclusions. At least this will give a new lead to social thinking, of our times.

MORTUARY CUSTOMS IN SOUTHERN INDIA¹

CLEMENT W. MEIGHAN

This paper represents an attempt to discern some regularities in the pattern of mortuary customs as practised in Southern India. The problem was primarily one of organization of data, so as to arrive at a more coherent picture of the distribution of certain traits. In gathering the information, certain additional problems appeared, and these are discussed in the conclusions. For the purpose of this study, the area included was arbitrarily limited to that portion of India which lies south of Hyderabad State.

The sources used include the manuals of the various states, census reports, and ethnographic accounts. In all, some information was found on the mortuary customs of approximately 200 castes and tribes. This seems a reasonably large number for the plotting of distributions, but unfortunately much of the information is limited to a single comment telling whether a given group practises cremation or burial. With a few exceptions, there does not seem to be a first-class ethnographic description of Indian mortuary customs. This is particularly true of mourning rites; the information on these is extremely sketchy and, in many cases, lacking altogether.

In order to give some idea of the range of variation in the mortuary customs of Southern India, a brief sketch of the death practices of certain groups is given here. The Brahmins will be considered first.

Thurston's *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* contains the following description of Brahmin death ritual:²

At the present day, many Hindus disregard certain ceremonies, in the celebration of which their forefathers were most scrupulous. Even the daily ceremonial ablutions, which are all important to a Brahman from a shastraic point of view, are now neglected by a large majority, and the prayers (mantrams), which should be chanted during their performance, are forgotten. But no Brahman, orthodox or un-orthodox, dares to abandon the death ceremonial and annual *sradh* (memorial rites). A Brahman beggar, when soliciting alms, invariably pleads that he has to perform his father or mother's *sradh*, or *upanayan* (thread ceremony), and he rarely goes away empty-handed.

When a Brahman is on the point of death, he is removed from his bed, and laid on the floor. If there is any fear of the day being a *danishtrapanchami* (inauspicious), the dying man is taken out of the house, and placed in the courtyard or pial (raised verandah). Some prayers are uttered, and a cow is presented. These are intended to render the passage of life through the various parts of the body as easy as possible. The spirit is supposed to escape through one of the nine orifices of the body, according to the character of the individual concerned. That of a good man leaves the body through the *brahmarandhra* (top of the skull), and that of a bad man through the anus. Immediately after death, the body is washed, religious marks are made on the forehead, and parched paddy (unhusked rice) and betel are scattered over and around it by the son. As a Brahman is always supposed to have

¹ I am indebted to Dr. D. G. Mandelbaum of the University of California for advice and assistance in the preparation of this report.

² Thurston, 1907, pp. 132 ff.

his fire with him, the sacred fire is lighted. . . Next, a little rice is cooked in a new earthen pot, and a new cloth is thrown over the corpse, which is roused by the recitation of the mantrams. Four bearers, to each of them dharba grass is given in token of his office, are selected to carry the corpse to the burning ground. The space, which intervenes between the dead man's house and the burning ground, is divided into four parts. When the end of the first of these is reached, the corpse is placed on the ground, and the sons and nephews go around it, repeating mantrams. They untie their *kudmis* (hair knot) . . . and keep on slapping their thighs. A little cooked rice is offered to the path as a *pathi bali* (wayside offering), to propitiate evil spirits, or *buthas*. As soon as the corpse has reached the spot where the pyre is, the celebrant of the rites sprinkles water thereon, and throws a quarter of an anna on it as the equivalent of purchase of the ground for cremation. The sacred fire is lighted, and the right palm of the corpse is touched with a gold coin. The nine orifices of the body are then smeared with ghee, and rice is thrown over the corpse, and placed in its mouth. The son takes a burning brand from the sacred fire, lights the pyre, and looks at the sun. Then he, and all the relations of the deceased, squat on the ground, facing east, take up some dharba grass, and, cutting into small fragments with their nails, scatter them in the air, while repeating some Vedic verses, which are chanted very loudly and slowly, especially at the funeral of a respected elder. The celebrant then pours a little water on a stone, and sprinkles himself with it. This is also done by the other relations, and they pass beneath a bundle of dharba grass and twigs of *Ficus glomerata* held by the *purohit* (officiating priest) and gaze for a moment at the sun. Once more they sprinkle themselves with water, and proceed to a tank (pond), where they bathe. When they return home, two rites, called *nagna* (naked) *sradh*, and *pachanasthapana* (stone-fixing), are celebrated. The disembodied spirit is supposed to be naked after the body has been cremated. To clothe it, offerings of water, with balls of cooked rice, are made, and a cloth, lamp, and money are given to a Brahman. The two stones are set up, one in the house and the other on the bank of the tank, to represent the spirit of the deceased. For ten days, libations of water mixed with gingelly (*Sesamum indicum*) seeds, called *thilothakam*, and a ball of cooked rice, must be offered to the stones. The ball of rice is left for crows to eat.

Of the traits mentioned in this description, two are of particular interest because of their wide distribution. The first, the custom of offering rice to the crows, occurs in all parts of Southern India, among all grades of castes and even among some of the hill tribes. In parts of India the belief behind this custom is that the soul of the dead person will return in the form of a crow and partake of the offering, so that the rice actually constitutes an offering to the spirit of the deceased. In other groups, the custom seems to be mere tradition, since additional food is offered specifically to the spirit of the dead. The universal traits of this custom are:

1. The rice offered only to crows—other animals and birds are driven away if they attempt to eat the rice.

2. It is considered an unfavorable omen if no crows come along to eat the rice. Among the Nayadi, if the crows do not eat the rice it is an indication that one of the mourners has not observed the taboos properly.¹

The custom of wide distribution is that of pouring water on the grave or burning ground. This custom also occurs in all parts of Southern India. During Vedic funeral services, this pouring of water was done with the avowed intent of chasing away the spirits based on a belief that ghosts are somehow unable to cross water.²

¹ Aiyappan, 1937

² Bendann, 1930, p. 74

There is also a suggestion that water is poured into the grave for the benefit of the spirit in some cases. For example, the Sembadavan (a caste of Tamil fisherman in North and South Arcot) connect the head of the corpse to the surface of the grave by means of a bamboo pole. This is removed after the grave is filled in, and water is then poured down the hole.¹ This custom is apparently intended to supply the spirit with drinking water.

The customs of Nayadis (the lowest caste of Malabar) show several differences from the usual high caste rituals.² The Nayadis formerly practised both burial and cremation, though cremation was rare in Thurston's time (this was a secondary cremation—bodies were first buried, then exhumed some months later and cremated). According to Aiyappan, the modern Nayadis bury their dead face upward with the head to the south. Some of the Nayadis orient their burials toward the north, but the reason for this difference in custom is not known. On the third day after death, there is an offering of toddy made to the deceased. Rice is offered to the crows for ten or fifteen days after death.

The Kudubi, a caste of South Canara, practise a still different method of corpse disposal:

The dead are buried in a sitting posture, with legs crossed tailorwise. Before the grave is filled in, a small quantity of cooked rice is put into the mouth of the corpse. On the third day, a small mound is made over the grave, and food offered to it. The final death ceremonies take place on the eleventh day, and consist in the sprinkling of holy water, and giving presents to the Brahmins. By the prosperous members of the community, a caste feast is given on the twelfth day.³

The custom of burying a corpse in a sitting position is widespread in Southern India and does not appear to be concentrated in any one locality.

Turning now to the Badaga, a group of cultivators in the Nilgiri Hills, several new features of death ceremony are presented. Before death, a gold coin is put into the dying Badaga's mouth. He is supposed to swallow it, but if he is unable to do so, it is wrapped in a cloth and tied to the arm. The corpse is kept in the house until the erection of a funeral car which has five to eleven tiers (always an odd number). A new cloth is put on the corpse which is carried on a cot or bier and placed on the lowest story of the car. The car is destroyed by the assembled visitors, and the corpse is then burned. Grain and milk are put in the mouth of the corpse.⁴

The Kurumba, a hill tribe of the Nilgiris, have funeral customs

¹ Thurston, 1909, v. 6, p. 355

² Aiyappan, 1937; Thurston, 1907 and 1909

³ Thurston, 1909, v. 4, p. 102

⁴ Thurston, 1909, v. 1, p. 111

which are very similar to those of Badaga. The Kurumba are unique, however, in the fact that they have erected dolmens as grave markers down to recent times.

Also in the Nilgiris, the Toda and Kota have developed a specialized ritual of secondary cremation, in which the relics of a first cremation are preserved for a second cremation which is held a year or so later.¹ This type of double cremation seems to be quite rare.

In addition to the rites previously described, there are also several other customs of disposal of the dead in Southern India. Mummification was formerly practised for chiefs, sometimes as a mere preliminary to cremation.² Exposure to vultures is the standard method of corpse disposal among the Parsees,³ and has also been noted to occur in Mysore among the Iraliga. The custom of "kalluseve" (burial under a heap of stones) occurs scattered over Mysore, apparently as an alternative to earth burial in some cases.⁴

Burial and Cremation:

Both burial and cremation are found in all parts of Southern India. From the literature, there are 89 groups which practise cremation. In addition, there are 65 additional groups which customarily use both methods of disposal of the dead. There is no sharply defined areal distribution of one of these traits. However, there is a regional emphasis for these customs. A survey of the map (figure 1) will show that a majority of the groups in southwestern India practise burial, while cremation is most common in Ganjam and Vizagapatam. On the west coast, the district of South Canara also shows a predominance of cremation, while the Nilgiri area forms an isolated area of emphasis on cremation. The central districts of Southern India (the region of Mysore) are about equally divided between cremation and burial, and also show the highest proportion of groups which practise both customs. The following table may help to clarify the situation:

¹ Walhouse, 1874

² Levin, 1930

³ Modi, 1890

⁴ Iyer, 1935

TABLE 1

District:	No. of groups	Bury only	Cremate only	do both
	which:			
Ganjam	..	2	14	2
Vizagapatam	..	6	22	9
Anantapur	..	5	4	2
Bangalore		7	7	15
Mysore	..	22	12	30
Bellary	..	5	4	2
Malabar	..	19	7	8
Cochin	..	18	6	15
Travancore	..	17	4	3
Nilgiri	..	7	8	5
S. Canara	..	8	13	8

It is apparent that there is wide difference in the relative emphasis placed on burial or cremation. In the case of the southwest coastal strip, however, the larger number of groups which bury does not necessarily indicate that the majority of the people in the area practise burial. Many of the groups recorded are hill tribes with a relatively small population, so that the relative percentages of population practising burial and cremation cannot even be estimated. However, in the Ganjam-Vizagapatam area, it appears certain that most of the people practise cremation. Here the groups which are indicated are pastoralists and agriculturalists who form the bulk of the population.

In table 2 the groups which cremate and those which bury are listed. It will be seen from a comparison of the two lists that there is apparently no difference in method of corpse disposal which is dependent on caste or occupation. Even one Brahmin caste (the Aradhya of Cuddapah, Kurnool, and Northern Madras Presidency) practises burial.¹ There is thus little regularity in the customs of the various groups. For example, four groups of weavers in Madras Province practise burial, while six other groups of weavers in the same area cremate.

A speculation might be made that burial was the original custom of southern India, and that the custom of cremation is intrusive in much of the area. This statement is supported by the fact that most of the existing tribes do practise burial (24 tribes bury, 6 cremate, 9 do both). A notable exception is the Nilgiri area, where a highly specialized ritual of secondary cremations has developed.

There is also some historical evidence for the increase of cremation

¹ Iyer, 1935

in recent times. Groups which formerly buried but which now practise cremation to a certain extent include the following:

Alavan	Salt pan workers	Madura and Tinnevelly
Beder	Hunters	Mysore
Kamalan	Artisans	Madras Province
Kaniyan	Astrologers	Malabar, Travancore, Cochin ¹

Crooke makes the following comment: ". . . it is one of the first indications of a jungle tribe being adopted into the Hindu fold that they replace burial by cremation. The Komarpaiks, palm-tappers of Kanara, up to sixty or seventy year ago used to bury; now they cremate adults and bury children. . ."²

The process of changing from burial to cremation appears to be continuing, having been noted more recently for the Morasu Okkalu (Cultivators of Kolar and Bangalore) and for the Sholiga, a tribe of Mysore.³ On the other hand, there seems to be no evidence for change in the opposite direction, i.e., from cremation to burial.

Burial position:

Both sitting burials and extended (prone) burials occur in all parts of southern India. There appears to be no regional emphasis; both burial positions have a scattered distribution (see map, figure 2). An interesting detail concerning burial position is that flexed burials (burials on the side in contracted position) appear to be quite common in India. This is in marked contrast to other areas of the world, such as western North America, where flexed burials are the rule and sitting burials are the exception.

Burial markers:

The information on various types of burial markers is so scanty that it can only suggest possible distributions. The custom of marking graves with three stones (usually one at the head, one at the feet, and one in the middle) is widespread in South India, though there are large areas where the custom apparently does not occur. The mapped distribution suggests that the three-stone markers might extend all around the coastal strip, leaving a large gap in the centre (Mysore, Salem, Coimbatore, and Madura).

Another type of grave marker, the small thatched-hut, seems to be localized in the southwest corner of the Indian peninsula, with one distant exception in Vizagapatam. It may be that the thatched-hut

¹ Thurston, 1909, vol. 1-3

² Crooke, 1899, p. 278

³ Iyer, 1935, vol. 4

grave marker continues further into the centre of the peninsula, but documentary evidence for this is lacking.

As for the earth mound, these have a widely scattered distribution. Earth mounds are probably almost universal as grave markers, and the large gaps in the distribution now known merely emphasize the lack of detailed information which seems characteristic of large parts of India.

Other types of grave markers which occur in India include the following :

1. Mud idols (The Madiga, leather workers of the Telugu country).
2. Dolmens (The Kurumba, a Nilgiri tribe).
3. Two sticks (The Aruva, cultivators of the coast of Ganjam).
4. Large wooden structures (The Perike, gunny bag weavers of Vizagapatam and Godavari).

Funeral Cars and secondary cremations:

Secondary cremation, the custom of preserving relics of the deceased's body for another cremation following the first burial or cremation, is a custom which apparently has a restricted distribution in India. The Nilgiri Hills seem to be the focal point of the trait, and the only spot in southern India where relics of a first cremation are saved and cremated at a later date. The Nayadis, the lowest Malabar caste, formerly practised secondary cremation also, but in this caste the second cremation took place with the bones of an individual who had been first buried for some time.

The use of a funeral car is a custom which has a somewhat wider distribution. The term "car" is actually a misnomer, since the funeral car is in no sense a vehicle of transportation. Instead, it is merely an elaborate structure in which the corpse lies in state before it is cremated or buried. The corpse is transported to the funeral car on a cot or litter, and is laid under the bottom storey of the car. The car is decorated with ribbons and sometimes with belongings of the deceased, and is dismembered by the assembled crowd before the disposal of the body. In some cases, the funeral car is burned with the body.

Funeral cars are used in the Nilgiri area and on the east coast. Secondary cremations seem to be restricted to the Nilgiris and adjacent west coast area.

Burial orientation:

It has been stated that in some cases the orientation of a burial can give a clue as to the original home of the people concerned.¹ This is because of a connection which sometimes exists in the minds of

¹ Basevi, 1920.

the people between the "home of the dead" and the home of the people's ancestors. The information available on India is not sufficiently detailed to permit the application of this theory to the Indian data. Burials which are oriented southward might actually be intended to start the individual towards the north, on the theory that a reclining individual would be facing in the proper direction when he stood up. It is also essential to know whether or not the burial is oriented for the purpose of directing the soul to the home of the dead, as there are many other reasons for choosing a particular burial orientation. Thus, the Mohammedan groups in India universally bury the dead on the right side, facing Mecca.

In at least one case, however, burials are oriented toward the "home of the dead" in southern India. Aiyappan comments: "The Savaras bury their dead with the head to the north in memory of their tribal origin in the north."¹ (It is noteworthy that the Savaras who are in the north, in Ganjam and Vizagapatam, do not bury at all, but now cremate the dead).

It will be seen from the map (figure 3) that the general trend is to orient burials with the head to the south. This may be connected with Hindu orthodoxy, since it occurs in the higher castes. An indication of this may be found in the custom practised by Brahmin groups in Mysore: immediately after the death of a Brahmin, his wife and children go outside and prostrate themselves toward the south, which is believed to be ruled by Yama.²

All four of the cardinal directions are used for orienting the dead in the districts of Bangalore, Mysore, Tumkur, and Travancore. A northward orientation (by non-Mohammedans) is found only along the west coast, while the eastern coastal strip shows a consistent pattern of southward oriented burials.

Differentiation between cremation and burial within a group :

As has been previously mentioned, there are 65 groups in southern India which habitually practise both burial and cremation. In many cases, it is not a matter of free choice as to whether a corpse will be buried or cremated, but rather there is a definite rule which determines which method of corpse disposal will be used. The number and nature of these rules display a strong interest in the status of the individual, a condition which might be expected in a caste-conscious society.

Religion forms one basis for discrimination in the Telugu speaking

¹ Aiyappan, 1937.

² Iyer, 1935.

country. Here, Saivites are regularly buried, while Vaishnavites are usually cremated. This is not at all a universal distinction—outside the Telugu area members of both sects seem to be treated alike in burial rituals.

Another source of differentiation is health. In South Canara, Malabar, and Cochin, as well as the Mysore districts, persons who die of epidemic diseases are usually buried, while all other persons are cremated (in the castes which do not practise cremation at all; many groups bury all individuals). This would appear to be a differentiation which might arise from an epidemic situation, where it was not possible to go through the cremation ritual with every dead person.

Another status differentiation is based on age. The custom of burying young children and cremating all others is widespread. This custom may have an economic basis—many groups apparently do not want to undergo the expense of a cremation for an infant.

The last of the widespread status differentiations is purely economic in origin. There are several references to groups of the southwest coastal strip which cremate the well-to-do and bury the poor. Cremation here seems to be a honorific ceremony which is desired by those who can pay for it.

In addition to the status groupings already described, there are a number of others which have a more restricted distribution. The following list summarizes various criteria for differentiation :

1. Cremation for Vaishnavites, burial for Saivites;
2. Cremation except for lepers and victims of epidemic diseases ;
3. Cremation *only* for lepers and/or pregnant women ;
4. Cremation for all adults, burial for children ;
5. Cremation for old people only, burial for all others ;
6. Cremation for well-to-do, burial for the poor ;
7. Cremation for chiefs only, burial for the rest (the Billava of Canara);
8. Cremation for married, burial for unmarried (the Lambadis of Coimbatore and the Banjara of Shimoga) ;
9. Cremation for holy men, burials for others (the Helavas of Mysore);
10. Cremation for the eldest member of a family only, burial for all others (the Tandan, a Malabar caste) ;
11. Cremation except for those who die violently (accident victims or victims of snakes and tigers), (the Jatapu of Madras and the Madadan Chetti) ;
12. Cremation for males, burial for females (the Gadaba, a tribe of Vizagapatam).

It will be seen that in most of the status differentiations, cremation is the honorific form of disposal of the dead. Thus it is the old,

the chiefs, the holy men, the males, who are cremated. Burial is reserved either for the bulk of the people or is specifically set aside for exceptional classes—lepers, pregnant women, disease and accident victims. Status differentiations of similar type, based on wealth, age, and marriage, are also found in the mortuary customs of numerous African groups.¹

In addition to a simple division between cremation for some classes and burial for others, additional status differentiations are superimposed on the practices of some South Indian groups. The Mochi, a caste of Mysore leather workers, make a primary division by setting off pregnant women in a special class—these are cremated, while the rest of the caste members are buried. However, a further status distinction, based on marriage, is made within the group that is buried. Married persons are buried in a sitting position, facing north, while unmarried persons are buried in an extended position with the head to the south. The Killekyata, a caste of showmen in Mysore, make similar distinction. In this case, the exceptional classes which are cremated include lepers and pregnant women. Of those who are buried, the unmarried are buried in an extended position, and the married are interred in a sitting position. A careful investigation into the burial customs of individual groups in India might yield still further examples of manifold status differences.

Conclusions :

This study has revealed the following generalizations concerning burial customs in southern India:

1. Burial and cremation both occur in all parts of southern India, but there is a regional difference—cremation is emphasized strongly in Ganjam and Vizagapatam while burial is found most frequently in the Malabar district, Cochin, and Travancore.

2. Burial customs in southern India reflect a strong interest in the status of the individual. In many cases, the method of corpse disposal serves to mark off special classes from the bulk of the group. The special classes are generally treated in a manner which is not the common custom of the area; for example, in Malabar, where most of the groups practise burial, the exceptional classes are set off by being cremated. In Vizagapatam, on the other hand, the special classes are buried. The special classes may be at either end of the social scale; that is, they may be composed of leaders and holy men or they may be composed of "tabooed" classes such as lepers and pregnant women.

¹ Kusters, 1919-1922.

The preoccupation with status appears the most striking thing about Indian burial customs. The essentials of the burial ritual, for the Indian, are disposal of the corpse and provision for the well-being of the spirit. The fact that twelve separate status differentiations could be superimposed on the basic mortuary ritual is graphic illustration of the fact that the dominant interests of a people will obtrude themselves into all aspects of the culture—even into those where these interests serve no functional purpose.

Kroeber had made the following comment concerning mortuary customs :

In their relative isolation or detachment from the remainder of culture, their rather high degree of entry into consciousness, and their tendency to strong emotional toning, social practices of disposing of the dead are of a kind with fashions of dress, luxury, and etiquette¹.

This statement is borne out, to some extent, by the diversity of burial practices in India, and by the fact that such practices do not appear to occur consistently with any one class or occupational group.

If it is true that burial customs are similar to "fashions", it would appear that their study can give a valuable sidelight on the culture of a group. To a certain extent, mortuary customs might be considered a cultural projection, since the only real essential is the disposal of the corpse. All the ritual which is tacked on to the business of disposing of a body is a reflection of the religious and social beliefs of the group. Therefore, changes in mortuary customs should reflect changes in religious and social customs. This is not to say that social attitudes should be studied by the roundabout method of diagramming mortuary customs, but only that mortuary customs may have more significance in cultural analysis than has been heretofore recognized.

TABLE 2—Groups which Bury the Dead :

GROUP	OCCUPATION	LOCATION	REMARKS
Agasa	washermen	Mysore	cremate lepers and pregnant women
Alavan	salt pan workers	Madura, Tinnevelly	
Aradya	Brahmins	Cuddapah, Kurnool, five northern districts of Madras Province	
Aruva	cultivators	Ganjam	
Bada Arasu	cultivators	Mysore	
Banajiga	traders	Mysore	cremate lepers
Banjara	carriers and bullock drivers	Shimorga	unmarried only
Bavuri	basket makers	Ganjam	also cremate
Bedar	hunters	Mysore	cremate lepers
Besta	fishermen	Mysore	cremate person held in great esteem

¹ Kroeber, 1927, p. 314

GROUP	OCCUPATION	LOCATION	REMARKS
Bhatra	tribe	Bastar	
Bhatrazu	bards and genealogists	All Mysore districts	also cremate
Billi Magga	weavers	All Mysore districts	
Billava	toddy drawers	Kanara	cremate headmen
Bondili	sect	Cuddapah and Madras Province	
Bonthuk	nomads	Kistna and Guntur	
Budubudiki	gypsy beggars	All Mysore districts	
Chenchu	tribe	S. Mahbubnagar	
Cherumans	agri. serfs	Malabar	
Darzi	tailors	All Mysore districts	also cremate
Dasari	beggars	Kolar, Tumkur, Chitaldrug, N. Arcot, Anantapur, Tanjore, Madura	
Devanga	weavers	Madras Province	
Domb	weavers	Vizagapatam	well-to-do only
Dombar	wandering acrobats	Mysore	
Eravaller	tribe	Coimbatore & Malabar	
Gadaba	tribe	Vizagapatam	women and children only
Ganiga	oil pressers	Mysore	
Gavara	cultivators	Vizagapatam	
Hale Paika	toddy drawers	Shimoga, Kadur	
Hallikar	cultivators	Tumkur, Bangalore, Mysore, Hassan	
Hasalar	tribe	N. E. Mysore districts	
Helava	beggars	Mysore	also cremate
Holey	agri. serfs	S. Canara, Nilgiri, Coimbatore, all Mysore districts	cremate holy men
Idiga	toddy drawers	Mysore	cremate lepers
Ilavar		Travancore, Tinnevelly, Malabar	
Iraliga	tribe	Mysore, Bangalore	also cremate
Irula	tribe	Nilgiris, North & South Arcot, Chingleput	
Izava	toddy drawers	Malabar, Cochin, Travancore	wealthy cremated
Jatapu		Madras Province	
Kadar	tribe	Cochin	
Kadir	tribe	Travancore	
Kadu	tribe	Mysore	cremate adults
Kahar	fishermen	Mysore	cremate married
Kadu Kuruba	tribe	Malabar, Nilgiri, Coorg, Mysore	cremate adults
Kakkalan	tribe	Cochin	
Kammalan	artisans	Madras Province	also cremate
Kamsala	artisans	Ganjam, Vizagapatam, Godavari	
Kanikar	tribe	Travancore	
Kannadiyan	cultivators	North & South Arcot, Tanjore, Chingleput, Mysore	
Katalarayan	fishermen	Cochin	also cremate
Kavara		Cochin	
Kelasi	barbers	S. Canara	cremate wealthy
Killekyata	showmen	Mysore	cremate lepers and pregnant women
Koi	tribe	E. Godavari	also cremate
Konga Malayan	tribe	Cochin	

GROUP	OCCUPATION	LOCATION	REMARKS
Koracha	fortune tellers & cattle breeders	Mysore, S. Arcot, Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Salem, Coimbatore, Belgaum	
Koraga	tribe	S. Canara	
Korama		Mysore	
Kudan		Cochin	also cremate
Kudubi		S. Canara	
Kumbara	potters	All Mysore districts	cremate lepers and those who die violently
Kunchitigas	cultivators	Tumkur	
Kurava	caste	Travancore	
Kuruba	shepherds	W. Bellary, N. Arcot, all Mysore districts	
Kykala	weavers	N. Arcot	Saivites cremated
Lambadi		Coimbatore	unmarried only
Linga Balija		N. Arcot	
Lingayat	religious sect	All South India	
Madiga	leather workers	Mysore, Bangalore, Tumkur, Kolar	cremate lepers and pregnant women
Mala Arayan	tribe	Travancore	
Mala Vedan	tribe	Travancore	
Malasar	tribe	Cochin, Coimbatore	
Malavali	cultivators	Salem	
Maleru	tribe	W. Malnad	
Mannans	tribe	Travancore, Cochin	also cremate
Mapilla	Mohammedan caste	Malabar, Cochin	
Maravan	caste	Madura, Tinnevelly, Ramnad	
Malivan	tribe	Vizagapatam	also cremate
Medar	bamboo workers	Shimoga, Kadur, Mysore	Saivites cremated
Mochi	leather workers	Mysore	cremate lepers and those who die violently
Modaliyar	cultivators	Bangalore, Kolar	cremate pregnant women
Moger	fishermen	S. Canara	also cremate
Mondaru	beggars	Mysore	also cremate
Morasu Okkalu	cultivators	Kolar and Bangalore	also cremate
Muduvan	tribe	Travancore, Coimbatore, Madura, Malabar	
Mukkuvan	fishermen	Malabar, Cochin	also cremate
Nadu Gaud	cultivators	Malnad, S. Canara	cremate old persons
Nagartha	merchants	Bangalore, Kolar	also cremate
Nalke	mat makers	S. Canara	also cremate
Nattuvans	occupational class of male dancing instructors	Mysore	
Nayadi	caste	Malabar, Cochin	cremate old people
Odari	potters	S. Canara	also cremate
Odde	tank diggers	Coimbatore, Nellore, Madura, Tinnevelly, Kurnool, Mysore	
Okkiliyan	cultivators	Madura, Coimbatore	
Otan	potters	Cochin	
Padma Sale	weavers	Madras Province	
Paliyan	tribe	Travancore, Madura	
Pallan	agri. labour	Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Madura, Tinnevelly, Salem, Coimbatore	
Palli		Tanjore, S. Arcot, Mysore, Madura, Coimbatore, Trichinopoly	
Palliyan	tribe	Travancore	
Panan	magicians and sorcerers	Cochin	cremate old and wealthy

GROUP	OCCUPATION	LOCATION	REMARKS
Panchala	artisans	Mysore, Hassan, Shimoga, Bangalore	
Paniyan	tribe	Malabar, Nilgiri	also cremate
Pantaram	tribe	Travancore	
Parayan	agri. serfs	Cochin	
Patra		Kurnool, Cuddapah	
Pindari	traders	Tumkur, Mysore, Bangalore	
Pisharati	temple servants	Travancore, Cochin, Malabar	
Pujari	Tamil priests	N. Arcot	
Pulayar	agri. serfs	Travancore, Cochin, Malabar	
Pulluvans	astrologers and herbalists	Malabar, Cochin	
Rachewars	agriculturalists and soldiers	Bangalore, Mysore, Kadur	also cremate
Reddi	cultivators	Kolar, Tumkur, Bangalore, Chitaldrug	cremate old and illustrious
Sadaru	cultivators	Mysore, Shimoga, Chitaldrug	
Salahuva-Vakkalu		All Mysore districts	cremate old men
Sanyasis	beggars	Kolar, Hassan, Mysore	
Satani	temple servants	All Mysore districts	also cremate
Salapu	weavers	Vizagapatam	also cremate
Sembadavan	fishermen	N. and S. Arcot	Saivites only
Shanar	toddy drawers	Travancore, Tinnevelly	
Sholaga	tribe	Coimbatore, Mysore	
Sudugadu Siddha	beggars	Mysore, Kadur, Shimoga	
Tandan	caste	Malabar	cremate eldest in family
Thammadi	temple servants	Mysore	
Thanda	Pulayan	Malabar, Cochin	
Tigala	cultivators	Tumkur	
Tiyan	toddy drawers	Malabar, Cochin, Travancore	
Togata	weavers	Cuddapah, Bangalore	
Toeya	cultivators	Kolar	
Ulladams	tribe	Coimbatore, Salem Travancore, Cochin, Mysore	
Uppara	salt makers	Madras Province, all Mysore districts	cremate lepers and pregnant women
Urali	tribe	Coimbatore, Travancore	
Valaiyan	hunters	Trichinopoly, Madura, Tanjore	
Valans	fishermen	Cochin	also cremate
Vallamban	cultivators	Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Madura	also cremate
Velan	sorcerers, doctors	Cochin	also cremate
Vettuvan	cultivators	Salem, Coimbatore, Madura, Malabar, S. Canara	also cremate
Vilkurup	artisans	Cochin	cremate old persons
Vishavan	tribe	Travancore	
Vodda	tank diggers	Kolar, Chitaldrug, Bangalore	cremate lepers, children and pregnant women
Yanadi	tribe	Nellore, Kistna, N. Arcot, Godavari	
Yeruva	tribe	Coorg	
Yogi Gurukkal	beggars	Malabar	

TABLE 3—Groups which cremate the dead :

GROUP	OCCUPATION	LOCATION	REMARKS
Arasu	land-holders, govt. servants	Mysore	
Badaga	cultivators	Nilgiri	
Bairagi	beggars	Canara, Mysore, Malabar	also bury
Bakkaru	cultivators	Mysore	also bury
Banjara	carriers and bullock drivers	Shimoga	unmarried buried
Bant	cultivators	S. Canara	
Bavuri	basket makers	Ganjam	also bury
Bedar	hunters	Mysore	also bury
Bhatrazu	bards and genealogists	Mysore	also bury
Bhondari	barbers	Ganjam	
Billava	toddy drawers	S. Canara	also bury
Bondili	sect	Madras Province	also bury
Brahmin	caste	All S. India	
Chaliyan	weavers	Cochin	
Chaptegara	carpenters	S. Canara	
Darzi	tailors	All Mysore districts	also bury
Devadiga	temple servants	S. Canara	
Gadaba	tribe	Vizagapatam	women buried
Gaudio	pastoralists	Ganjam	
Gavara	cultivators	Vizagapatam	also bury
Gondhali	beggars	All Mysore districts	also bury
Gudala	basket makers	Ganjam, Vizagapatam,	
Gudikara	wood carvers	Shimoga	
Gurukal	caste	Travancore	
Hasalar	tribe	Mysore	also bury
Idaiyan	shepherds	Coimbatore, Tanjore	
Iraliga	tribe	Mysore, Bangalore	also bury
Izhava	toddy drawers	Malabar, Cochin, Travancore	poor buried
Jangala	cultivators	All Mysore districts	
Jetti	wrestlers, gymnasts	Mysore	
Jingar	craftsmen	Shimoga, Bangalore, Mysore	
Kadu Kuruba	tribe	Malabar, Nilgiri, Coorg, Mysore	children buried
Kadupattan	caste	Cochin	children and epidemic-victims buried
Kadu	tribe	Mysore	children buried
Kahar	fishermen	Mysore districts	unmarried buried
Kaikolan	weavers	Cochin	epidemic-victims buried
Kalinji	cultivators	Ganjam, Vizagapatam	
Kamma	cultivators	Madras Province	
Kaniyan	astrologers	Malabar, Travancore, Cochin	
Kappiliyan	cultivators	Madura, Tinnevelly	
Kapu	cultivators	Madras Province	
Katalarayan	fishermen	Cochin	also bury
Kelasi	barbers	S. Canara	cremate wealthy
Kharvi	fishermen	S. Canara	
Khond	tribe	Ganjam, Vizagapatam, Orissa	
Kalayan	herders	S. Canara, Malabar	
Kois	tribe	Godavari	also bury
Koliyan	weavers	Tanjore, Madura	
Konda Dora	cultivators	Vizagapatam	

GROUP	OCCUPATION	LOCATION	REMARKS
Kota	tribe	Nilgiri	
Kotte-Okkalu	cultivators	Shimoga, N. Canara	
Kotipattan	caste	Travancore	
Kroshnavakkar	caste	Travancore	
Kudan	caste	Cochin	
Kudiya	caste	S. Canara	
Kunnuvan	caste	Madura	
Kurumba	tribe	Nilgiri	
Kykala	weavers	N. Arcot	also bury
Ladar	merchants	Mysore	
Lambadi		Coimbatore	
Madiga	leather workers	Mysore, Bangalore, Kolar, Tumkur	unmarried buried lepers and pregnant women only
Mahratta	cultivators	All Mysore districts	
Mailari	beggars	Kolar, Cuddapah, Kadur, Shimoga	
Mali	cultivators	Madras Province	
Mandadan	Chetti	Nilgiri, Malabar	also bury
Maravan	caste	Madura, Tinnevelly	
Mattiya	cultivators	Ganjam, Vizagapatam	
Mavilan	tribe	Vizagapatam	also bury
Mila	fisherman	Ganjam, Vizagapatam	
Modaliyar	cultivators	Bangalore, Kolar	also bury
Moger	fishermen	S. Canara	also bury
Muka Dora	tribe	Vizagapatam	
Mukkuvan	fishermen	Cochin, Malabar	also bury
Myasa Beda	hunters	Mysore	
Nadu Gauda	cultivators	Malnad, S. Canara	young buried
Nagaralu	cultivators	Vizagapatam	
Nagartha	merchants	Bangalore, Kolar	also bury
Nalke	mat makers	Canara	also bury
Nattukottai			
Chetti	money lenders	Madura	
Nayadi	caste	Malabar	young people buried
Nayar	caste	Malabar	
Odari	potters	S. Canara	also bury
Omanaito	cultivators	Vizagapatam	
Paidi	weavers	Vizagapatam	
Palli	caste	Travancore, Chingleput, Mysore, Tanjore, S. Arcot, Madura, Trichinopoly, Coimbatore	also bury
Panchala	artisans	Mysore, Hassan, Bangalore, Shimoga	
Paraiyan	caste	Chingleput	also bury
Pattanavan	fishermen	Kistna to Tanjore	also bury
Patvegara	silk weavers	S. Canara, Mysore, Bangalore, Anantapur	
Perike	gunny bag weavers	Godavari, Vizagapatam	
Pooja	cultivators	Ganjam, Vizagapatam	
Rachewar	cultivators	Bangalore, Mysore, Kadur	
Reddi	cultivators	Kolar, Tumkur, Bangalore, Chitaldrug	also bury
Salahuvu Vakkalu	cultivators	Mysore, Shimoga, Chitaldrug	young buried
Salapu	weavers	Vizagapatam	old men only
Satani	temple servants	Vizagapatam, N. Arcot, all Mysore districts	also bury
Savara	tribe	Ganjam, Vizagapatam	
Segidi	toddy sellers	Ganjam, Vizagapatam	
Sembadavan	fishermen	N. and S. Arcot	also bury

GROUP	OCCUPATION	LOCATION	REMARKS
Servegara	cultivators	S. Canara, Bellary	
Sondi	toddy sellers	Vizagapatam	
Sonkari	lac bangle makers	Ganjam, Vizagapatam	
Tiyan	toddy drawers	Malabar, Cochin, Travancore	also bury
Toda	tribe	Nilgiri	
Tonti	weavers	Ganjam	
Tottiyan	cultivators	Tinnevelly, Madura, Salem, Coimbatore	
Uppara	cultivators	All Mysore districts, Madras Province	lepers and pregnant women only
Valan	fishermen	Cochin	
Vallamban	cultivators	Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Madura	also bury
Velan	sorcerers, doctors	Cochin	also bury
Yata	toddy drawers	Ganjam, Vizagapatam	

TABLE 4.—Extended Burials and Sitting Burials

Groups which have extended burials:

Bonthuk	nomads	Kistna and Guntur
Helava	beggars	Mysore
Irula	tribe	N. Arcot
Padma Sale	weavers	Madras Province
Pulayar	agri. serfs	Travancore, Cochin, Malabar
Togata	weavers	Cuddapah
Vishavans	tribe	Travancore
Yanadi	tribe	Nellore, Kistna, Godavari, N. Arcot
Chenchu	tribe	Mahbubnagar
Kadar	tribe	Cochin
Kadir	tribe	Travancore
Killekyata	showmen	Mysore
Kuruba	cultivators	Bellary, N. Arcot
Madiga	leather workers	Nellore, Kistna, Godavari, N. Arcot
Mala	low caste	Nellore, Kistna, Godavari, N. Arcot
Mannan	tribe	Travancore
Mappilla	Mohammedan caste	Malabar, Cochin
Mochi	leather workers	Mysore
Nayadi	low caste	Cochin, Malabar
Nayinda	barbers	Bangalore, Mysore, Kolar
Palliyan	tribe	Madura
Paniyan	tribe	Nilgiri
Paraiyan	caste	Coimbatore, Travancore, N. Arcot to Tinnevelly
Sholaga	tribe	Coimbatore

Groups which have sitting burials:

Aradhyā	Brahmins	Cuddapah, Kurnool, five northern districts of Madras Province
Budubudiki	beggars	All Mysore districts
Devanga	weavers	Madras Province
Ganiga	oil pressers	Canarese districts
Helava	beggars	Mysore
Iraliga	tribe	Mysore
Kammalan	artisans	Madras Province
Kamsala	artisans	Ganjam, Vizagapatam
Killekyata	showmen	Mysore
Kudubi	artisans	S. Canara
Lingayat	sect	All S. India
Malasar	tribe	Coimbatore and Cochin

Maravan	tribe	Madura and Tinnevelly
Mavilan	leather workers	Vizagapatam
Mochi	barbers	Mysore
Nayinda	weavers	Bangalore, Mysore, Kolar
Padma Sale	fishermen	Madras Province
Patanavan	traders	Kistna to Tanjore
Pindari	temple servants	Tumkur, Mysore, Bangalore
Pisharati	weavers	Travancore, Cochin, Malabar
Salapu	fishermen	Vizagapatam
Sembadavan	toddy drawers	N. and S. Arcot
Shanar	beggars	Travancore, Tinnevelly
Yogi Gurukkal	cattle breeders	Malabar
Kannadiyan	cultivators	N. and S. Arcot, Tanjore, Chingleput, Mysore
Okkiliyans		Madura and Coimbatore

TABLE 5—Grave Markers

Groups which have three stones for grave markers:

Chaliyan	cotton weavers	Malayalam district
Cheruman	agri. serfs	Malabar
Irula	tribe	N. Arcot
Mala Pulaya	tribe	Travancore
Nayadi	caste	Malabar
Urali	tribe	Travancore
Yanadi	tribe	Nellore, Kistna, Godavari, and N. Arcot

Groups which have a small thatched hut for a grave marker:

Mannan	hill tribe	Travancore
Mattiya	cultivators	Ganjam, Vizagapatam
Maduvan	tribe	Travancore
Maduvar	tribe	Coimbatore, Travancore, Malabar, and Madura
Savara	tribe	Ganjam, Vizagapatam

Groups which mark the grave by an earth mound:

Kubudi	caste	S. Canara
Nalke	mat makers	S. Canara
Toreya	cultivators	Coimbatore, Salem
Chenchus	tribe	Mahbubnagar
Mayayali	cultivators	Salem
Silavant	caste	Mysore, Vizagapatam

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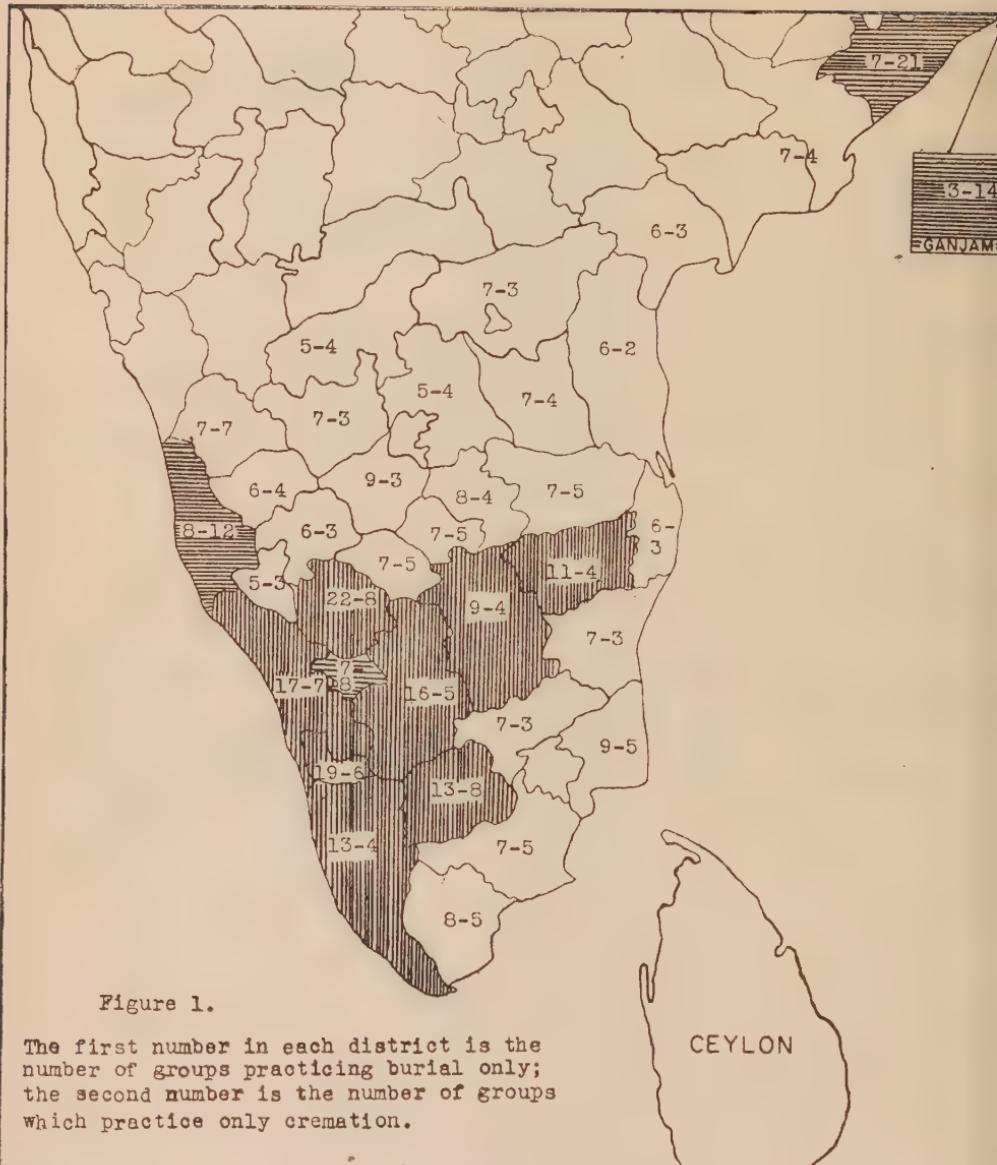


Figure 1.

The first number in each district is the number of groups practicing burial only; the second number is the number of groups which practice only cremation.



AREAS IN WHICH THE MAJORITY
OF GROUPS PRACTICE CREMATION



AREAS IN WHICH THE MAJORITY
OF GROUPS PRACTICE BURIAL

SOUTHERN
INDIA

200 MILES

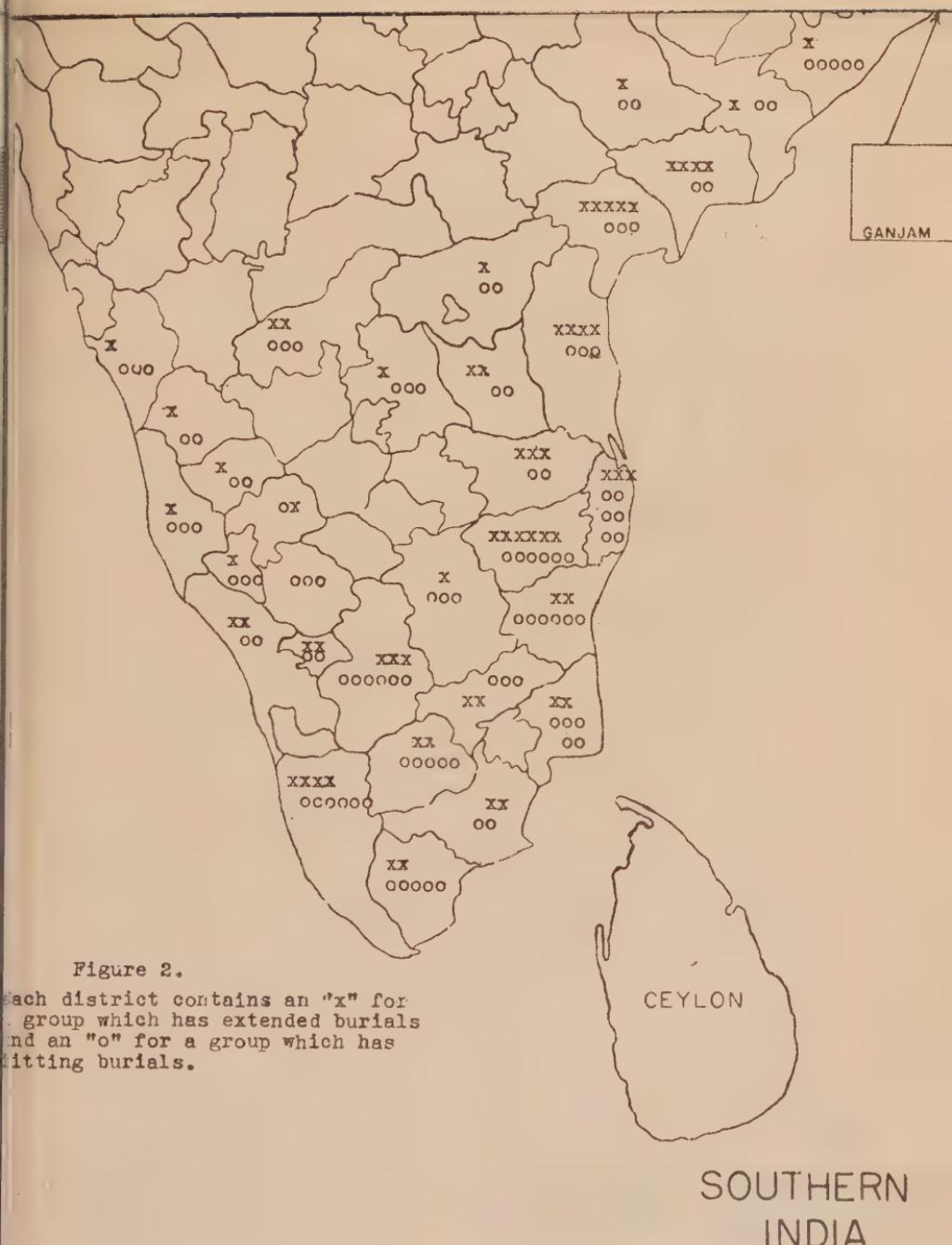


Figure 2.

Each district contains an "X" for a group which has extended burials and an "O" for a group which has fitting burials.

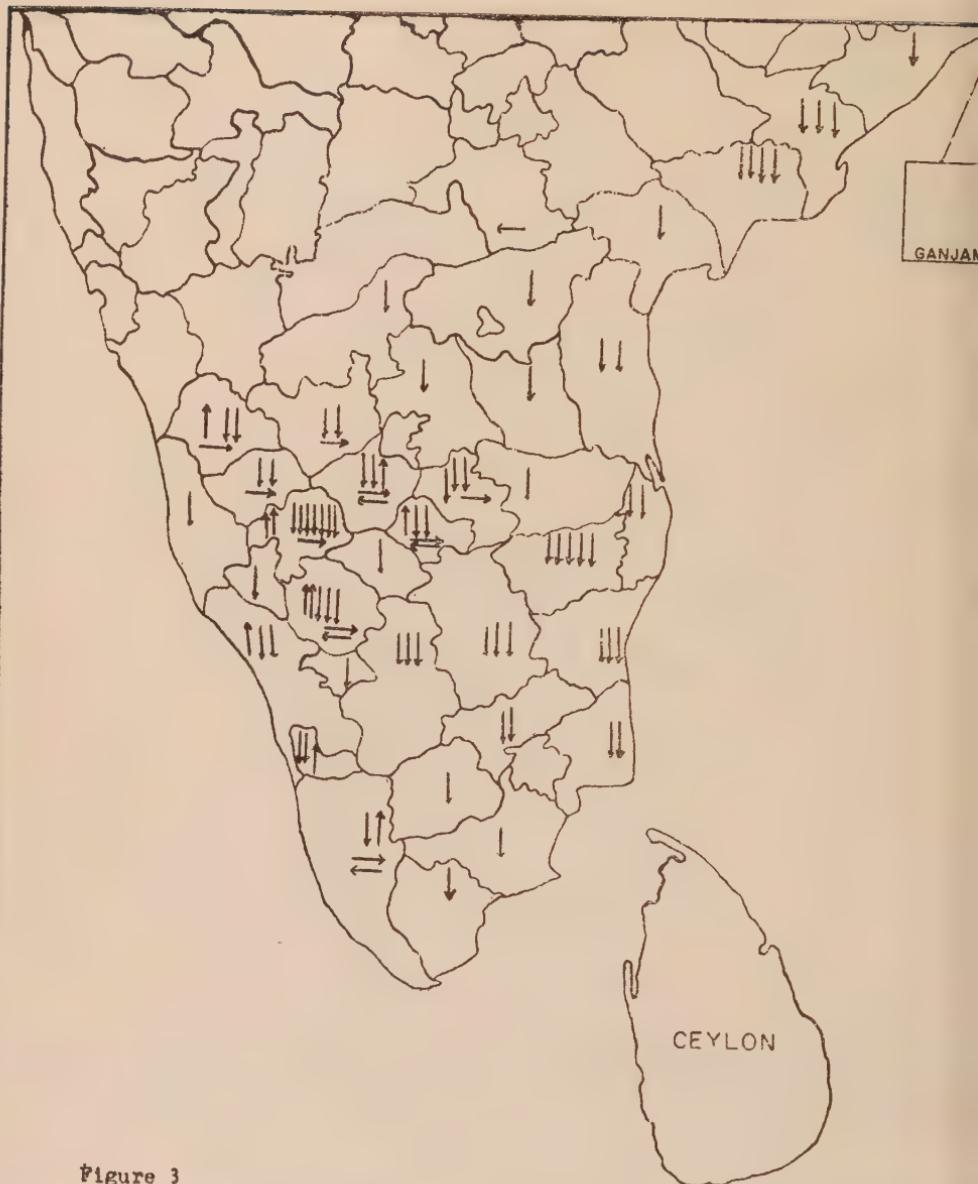


Figure 3

Arrows indicate the direction of burial orientation; one arrow for each group in the districts in which the group is found.

SOUTHERN
INDIA

200 MILES

ANTAR FOR THE ANTHROPOLOGIST

CEDRIC DOVER

Antarah Ibn Shaddad al-Absi was a mulatto warrior-poet of the sixth century whose name, in the Arab lands, has come to symbolize all that is good in poetry and courage. "I am an Antary," said an elderly man whose loyalty had been questioned by Doughty¹ "and this is an Antary (of the children of Antar). We will not forsake thee."

The songs of Antar are still amongst the most popular in North Africa ; and the tales of his adventures, taken from the *Sirat Antarah* (Narrative of Antar), are deeply embedded in Arab culture. He is, in fact, the only poet, and the *Sirat* contains the only collection of tales, approved by the Prophet himself², "Relate to your children," the Prophet had insisted, though firmly opposed to the recital of romances, "the traditions concerning Antar, for they will steel their hearts harder than stone." He also confessed that "The one famous Bedouin warrior that I have wished I could have known was Antar."

The importance of such a personage to cultural anthropology is evident, but Antar has been completely neglected by students of the social sciences. Studies of the mechanism of "race" prejudice, as revealed in the poetry of coloured minority groups, ignore this classic mulatto poet, whose entire life was highly conditioned by it. Yet many fragments of his poems have survived³ while the whole of his *Mu'allaka* (one of the seven "suspended poems", so called because they were hung in the Kaaba after a contest that tested both poetry and courage) is accessible⁴. This "golden ode" is believed by many to be the best in the collection.

The monumental *Sirat Antarah*⁵ is still more important. It is, in spite of the *Arabian Nights*, the most outstanding account of manners in the ancient Arab world; it is indispensable to the study of the social history of chivalry, which originated with the Arabs, as Herder, Simonde de Sismondi, Hammer-Purgstall and others have

¹ C. M. Doughty: *Travels in Arabia Deserts*. London (Cape & Medici Society) 1921 (1888), I, 121.

² A. P. Caussin de Perceval: *Essai sur l'histoire des Arabes avant l'Islamisme*. Paris (Didot Freres) 1847, II, 521. Taken from the *Kitab al-Aghani* of Abulfara.

³ Iskander Agha Abbkariyas: Selections from the poems attributed to Antar. Beirut 1881 (in Arabic). Also Arabic MSS in the British Museum, numbers Or. 3155 and Or. 3157.

⁴ Sir William Jones: *The Moallakat*, or seven Arabian poems which were suspended in the Temple at Mecca. London (Elmsly) 1782. For a sympathetic, but highly poetised rendering see W. S. Blunt: *The seven golden odes of pagan Arabia*. London (Chiswick Press) 1903.

⁵ The Arabian edition was published at Bulak 1866-70 in 32 volumes (8°); the Syrian edition, which can be regarded as a standard abridgement, at Beirut in ten volumes (1865-77) and again in six volumes (1883-95).

shown; and it is the first work intimately and emphatically concerned with colour prejudice. Unfortunately, it has never been fully translated, but a considerable view of the entire work is provided by Terrick Hamilton¹ and Devic².

This great story of the life and times of Antar was kept alive and embellished by the *rawis* or professional reciters. During the reign of Harunal-Rashid it had already achieved considerable proportions, and the philologist As'mai seems to have used it, with additions of his own, to beguile his master. As'mai lived into the reign of the mulatto Caliph Mamun, under whom the cultural renaissance begun by Harunal-Rashid reached its peak. Literature and science flowered under his patronage; the great classics were collected by his ambassadors and translated by his protégés, among whom were some fifteen hundred poets from various lands; the Arab oral works were transcribed, and the written ones copied again, for his library; and, in such circumstances, it is certainly probable that he required As'mai and his assistants to prepare a manuscript of the narrative that must have moved him more than most. For Mamun had felt the barbs of prejudice; and the remarkable success story of another black man, with its contemporary analogies for the Caliph's enemies and detractors, must have provided him with very gratifying compensations. The internal evidence of the book supports this assumption, though it seems that the earliest known recension is by Muhammad Ibn al-Mujalla al-Antari, a physician practising at a town on the Tigris during the first half of the twelfth century.

In this work, which seldom descends to mere fantasy, Antar is presented as a black giant, who roars like a lion and has the stature of "a tower set on a promontary". His horse, Abjer, is the prototype of the great steeds of Arabic and Western history; his sword, Dhami, which King Arthur might gladly have exchanged for Excalibur, is "two cubits long and two spans wide and is forged from the metal of Amalec, like that of a thunderbolt"; and his brother and constant companion, Shiboob, is a shrewd and puckish figure, whose arrows never missed and whose speed is so phenomenal that he was nicknamed "Father of the Wind".

The blacksmith of Antar and Shiboob assumes from the first the values one would expect in a work designed as a protest and a compensation. Thus, when the Emir Shaddad sees the slave Zebeeba, we are told at once of his uncontrollable response :

¹ Terrick Hamilton : *Antar, a Bedouine romance*. London (John Murray) 1820. Four volumes, incomplete. My quotations are from this work.

² L. M. Devic : *Les aventures d'Antar fils de Cheddad, roman Arabe des temps anto-Islamiques*. Paris (Leroux) 1878, 2nd ed. An abridgement, not completed.

"He longed for her in his soul : her form was delicate, her eyes inspired love, her smile was enchanting, and her gestures graceful. As the poet has said: 'In blackness there is virtue, if you observe its beauty well; thy eyes do not regard the white or red. Were it not for the black of the mole on a fair cheek, how would lovers feel the value of its brilliancy? Were not the musk black it would not be precious. Were it not for the black of night, the dawn would not rise. Were it not for the black of the eye, where would be its beauty? And thus it is that the black ambergris has the purest fragrance.' So he took the woman."

The child of this union, Antar, is continuously aware of his position as a black man; and he expresses his awareness not only by fighting against prejudice with words and heroic deeds, but also by special consideration towards those who shared his social disability. "Shall we free illustrious chiefs and kill slaves?" he rhetorically asks his brother, who has suggested the execution of an enemy slave, "particularly when between them and us there is the tie of blackness? Release him, for we will be kind to him on account of his dark complexion."

The motif of the work, as indicated by these two quotations alone, is found throughout the thousand or so poems which adorn it. A large, perhaps the larger, number of these is attributed to Antar, and some are probably his owing to the agency of the *rawis*; others are possibly based on fragments. But all the verses he is made to sing in the book express the ideas and sentiments associated with him, all are Antarian, and all belong at least as much to him as the Aesopian fables belong to Aesop. And several, it might be added, are as beautiful as any in classical Arabian poetry.

They tempt quotation, but I shall confine myself to two that are appropriate to this note. One is the usual warrior's address, as he prepares to do battle with Badhramoot, "the blue-eyed and foul-raced Greek":

"This day, as I exhibit my powers before Chosroe, I will drag down the support of Greece from its foundations and sever Badhramoot's head with my scimitar..."

Hear the words of an intrepid lion—resolute, undaunted, all conquering.

I am Antar, of whom warriors can bear witness in the combat under the thick battle-dust.

And my sword is my companion in the night-shades, as also are my horse and my sword in the conflicts.

Night is my complexion, but day is my emblem : the sun is the mirror of my deeds.

This day thou shall feel the truth of my words ; and I will prove that I am the Phoenix of the age."

In the other he claims that wisdom has come to him from misfortune, strength from his blackness:

"I have borne the evils of fortune, till I have discovered its secret meaning, even before it was concealed.

I have met every peril in my bosom, and the world can cast no reproach upon me for my complexion: my blackness has not diminished my glory.

Were this not the colour of my skin, the morning's dawn would not bow before me at hearing my name.

Tribes talk of pedigrees as an honour, but the blow of my sword in battle is my glory."

Yet he is careful to emphasize that he is not vainglorious : "My mother is Zebeeba : I disavow not her name, for I am Antar and

I am not vainglorious." Indeed, apart from the knightly usages of the day¹, he could not be; for he had the typical "half-breed's philosophy" of the unity of man: "All mankind is but as one individual: some are exalted, some debased."

The abundance of such material in the *Sirat Antarah* would, I am certain, repay study of the original sources—a task my unfortunate education precludes me from undertaking. A new and fundamentally important chapter in the history of racialism would thereby be written, which would materially enlarge the demonstrable absurdity of the prevailing belief that "race" prejudice is a post-industrial phenomenon. It has been carried, chiefly by American sociologists, to such lengths that even notorious anti-semites like Montaigne, Herder and Voltaire have been presented as paragons of racial benevolence.

Moreover, one could profitably extend such an investigation to the writings of those who have discussed Antar; for it is remarkable how much fluttering he has caused in the dovecotes of Orientalism. Huart, for example, describes him² in carefully suggestive language, as "a true Desert poet..whose name was later to serve the popular story-tellers of the Romance of Antar as the incarnate type of the virtues ascribed to the wandering paladins of the heathen tribes. The hero of the tribe of Abs was a mulatto, the son of an Abyssinian slave, and his lower lip was split."

Nicholson³ admits that he is a "Bedouin Achilles", but hastens to add: "Goddess-born, however, he could not be called by any stretch of the imagination. His mother was a black slave. .his contemptuous reference to 'jabbering barbarians' (a rendering devised for the argument) and to 'slaves with their ears cut off, clad in sheepskin' (an observational fact), are characteristic of the man who had risen to eminence in spite of the stain on his scutcheon."

Brockelmann⁴, for reasons I need not emphasize, is still more unable to disguise his approach to his subject, whom he excludes from his *History of the Islamic Peoples*. He supports "Noldeke's observation" that Antar "betrays himself as a half-caste in lines 25 and 27 of his *Mu'allaka*, where like a true upstart, he refers to black slaves in somewhat contemptuous terms." Noldeke's role in the shaping of Nordicism is well-known; and, therefore, it is not surprising that reference to the offending lines merely reveals the use, without "value

¹ See, e.g., I Samuel 17: 44, 46.

² C. Huart: *A history of Arabic literature*. London (Heinemann) 1903, 13-14.

³ R. A. Nicholson: *A literary history of the Arabs*. Cambridge (University Press) 1930, 2nd ed., 114-116.

⁴ C. Brockelmann: *Antar*. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. London (Luzac) 1913, I, 361.

judgements" or feelings of superiority, of metaphors common to the desert Arabs of the poet's day. Brockelmann adds craftily, to show his own impartiality while underlining the supposedly typical vanity of the mulatto, that it is not very probable that Antar had a hare-lip, "as in that case he would hardly have represented a man with this infirmity in his *Mu'allaka*."

These niceties of scholarly commentary, which tell us more about their authors than about Antar, have naturally discouraged consideration of the larger interests of his life and work. They also indicate an attitude which has helped to prevent the complete publication of every translation, whether in English or otherwise. The resulting loss to literature and the social sciences will, I hope, be made good, through the interest of those students of man who can sense the rich harvest of understanding that the *Sirat Antarah* has to offer.

ONAM TRADITION OF KERALA (An observation)

L. A. RAVI VARMA

Onam is the national festival of Kerala and is enjoyed by all Malayālies irrespective of caste or creed, and as far as is known, it has no counterpart in any other part of India. It is purely a social function though a faint religious halo has got attached to it as is usual with every phase of life of the Hindus. The festival is on the Śravana Nakṣatra (Onam) day in the Solar month of Simha (Cīnām), that is, during the Sun's passage through the zodiacal sign of Leo. This often coincides with the Śravana-karma or Upā-karma day which falls on the Śravana Nakṣatra day in the Lunar month of Śravana which conventionally marks the start of the sun towards the south in its Dakṣināyana course. This was the period of winter recess of the Aryan during which no vedic rites, including house-hold rites as Upanayana, were performed and when even the study of the vedas was replaced by secular studies like Vedāngas as is evident from the current ritualism in the Upākarma ceremony. This Dakṣināyana conception, however, seems to have nothing to do with Onam celebrations or its traditions. The Kerala festival is said to be in honour of a traditional king Mahābali during whose reign peace and plenty flourished in the land. This king does not appear to have been a historical personage at all. Traditionally he was an Asura and belonged to the Kṛta-yuga as his rule ends during Vāmanāvatāra which is assigned to that yuga while Kerala is said to have arisen from the sea only in the next or Tretā-yuga. Through the kind courtesy of Dr. Aiyappan, Superintendent, Government Museum, Madras, I learn that the ruins of the old shrine Mahābalipuram on the East Coast have nothing to do with Mahābali, its real name being Māmallapuram. There is, in fact, neither Onam nor any tradition of it to be found on the East Coast.

The word Mahābali may mean one who sacrificed much or gave much¹ or very powerful². As the tradition speaks of an unusually great gift, it will be more appropriate to recognize the first meaning for the term.

The tradition current in Kerala is the one occurring in the Vāmana episode of the purāṇas where Viṣṇu in the form of Vāmana or Dwarf outwits Mahābali by begging for a bare three feet of ground to be measured by his own feet. When Mahābali grants this request, Viṣṇu assumes his all-embracing form, measures the whole earth by a single step, the heavens by a second, places the third step on the head of Mahābali for want of space and hurls him down to Pātāla; the moral being, 'pride goes before a fall' even when it is the pride of benevolence.

Mahābali when he departs from the earth begs of Viṣṇu permission to return to his land once a year. This is granted, he being permitted to return to the earth on the Śravana day in the Solar month of Simha. The Onam celebrations are to welcome their former beloved king on his annual return.

Traditions are often badly mixed up episodes and difficult of analysis. But it should be remembered that every tradition however bizarre, enshrines some element of truth, often some important truth worth knowing. Hence the urge to analyse them.

The earliest Vāmana episode encountered is the one occurring in the Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa³. As may be naturally expected, it is different in form from the purānic story though the germ can be well recognized. From the nature of the language used and the picture presented, the episode, even at the time the Brāhmaṇa was composed, appears to have been an already old tradition whose real meaning has been lost⁴. The story is as follows :

There was rivalry between the Devas and Asuras in the form of a rush for new lands, in which the Devas were not successful. The Asuras managed to acquire the land which they wanted to divide among themselves and enjoy. For this purpose they proceeded to measure the land from west to east. Learning of this, and thinking of their fate if they did not get any land, the Devas decided to go to the Asuras and ask for some portion of their land. Thereupon they went to the Asuras with their God Viṣṇu which was Yajñā⁵ and requested for some portion of the newly acquired land. Seeing that the area where the Viṣṇu cult prevailed was very small, the Asuras, though not quite willing, promised to give them that area where their religion prevailed. The Devas readily accepted the gift. They, placing Viṣṇu towards the east, i.e., extending their religion towards the east, began to spread themselves and propagate their religion in all directions bringing the land under their control. They thus acquired all the land, established their form of religion, fire worship, and went about toiling leaving their rivals landless⁶.

The episode is clear enough. The devas by cunning and strategy occupied the whole area depriving the original owners of the land. Is this the story of Aryan infiltration into the land occupied by the earlier settlers, perhaps the people of Mohen-jo-daro civilization? We know from puranic tradition that Asuras were as a class Śiva worshippers and we know explicitly from the Vedas that Aryans were Viṣṇu worshippers, the same as fire worshippers, as stated in the text itself (*vide* note 6). We have reason to infer that Mohen-jo-daro people were Śiva worshippers. To this must be added the fact that

though the presiding deity of the star Śravana is Viṣṇu, the deity invoked in Onam celebrations is Śiva as Trkkākkara-appan represented in the form of a truncated pyramid. There is sense in invoking Śiva in a festival in honour of the Śiva worshipper king Mahābali whose lands were deprived of by the cunning of Viṣṇu. The current tradition appears to be the Vedic tradition with the incorporation of elements from other Vedic conceptions as the Trivikrama representation of Viṣṇu. If this is so, do the old inhabitants of Kerala represent the remnants of the dispersed Mohen-jo-daro people and Onam celebrations the yearnings of that people for their lost land and civilization? This is not so fantastic a proposition as may appear at first sight. It is well known that when a culture gets ousted from its moorings and forced to disperse, the remnants of it will usually be seen only at the very ends of its itinerary and even that only if such end-spots are fairly sequestered from further molestations. It is probable that one branch at least of the Mohen-jo-daro people might have reached Kerala area *via* the coastal strip—which is easy enough—when they were forced to disperse from their home. And this area of Kerala was one well protected by natural barriers from molestations so that the wanderers had every opportunity to preserve their traditions to a considerable extent. Onam tradition and celebrations current in Kerala and unknown in other parts of India may represent the old tradition of their having been cheated by the Aryans at an earlier period. Kerala of those days may not be the same geographical area as we know now; the present inhabited low lands might have been under the sea and the foreign wanderers might have settled on the slopes of the High Ranges where even today one meets with evidence of occupation by a highly civilized people who built stone and masonry houses. Excavations in this area may reveal important facts connected with the settlers of this area.

Arguing on the same principle, one may expect some remnants of traditions similar to that of Onam in the easternmost outposts of Greater India, as Indonesia, Siam, Assam and even Eastern Bengal, although, one may not be justified in expecting much there because of the many subsequent molestations. In this connection it may be worth noting that though geographically and linguistically related, the culture, traditions, habits and even certain ethnical factors of Keraliyas differ markedly from those of their neighbours, e.g., the people of the Tamil-nad. On the whole I think that work on this line may be fruitful.

¹ mahā=great+bali=sacrifice or gift.

² maha=great+bala=power+'in' suffix.

- 3 The third Brāhmaṇa of the second Prapāṭhaka of the first Kāṇḍa of the Mādhyandina recension of Satapatha.
- 4 Sāyaṇa in his commentary says “*Vedi-parigraham vaktum itihāsam upanyasyati*”. The use of the term ‘*itihāsam*’ clearly shows that Sāyaṇa himself recognizes the story to be an old tradition.
- 5 “*Te yajñam eva viṣṇum...*” :— Viṣṇu was their God and Yajña or sacrifice into the Fire was its form. The sense being that they went to the Asuras to request for some land for their clan which has the Yajña form of religion.

6 Mantra I

Devaśca va asuraśca, ubhaye prajapathah pasprdhire. Tato deva anuvyam ivasuh. Atha hasura menire, asmakam evedam khalu bhuvanam iti. There was rivalry between the fraternal groups, the Devas and Asuras. In it Devas had to be in the rear, i.e., did not succeed. Then Asuras thought ‘this world is ours indeed’. (Anuvyam=anugamanam ; nyagbhuṭim prapta iva bābhuvuḥ—Sāyaṇa.)

Mantra II

Te ho'chu ; Hantemam prthivīm vibhajamahai, tam vibhajyopajivameti. Tam suksnaiṣ-carmabhiḥ paścat praṇīo vibhaiamana abhiyuh. They (Asuras) said ‘let us divide this earth and having divided enjoy it’. (Saying this) they (Asuras) proceeded to measure the land from west to east with ox-hide (ox-hide as tape for measuring).

Mantra III

Tad vai devah suśrūvuh vibhajante ha va imam asurah prthivīm. Preta, tad esyamo yatremaṇ asura vibhaiante; ke tataḥ syama yad asyai na bhajemarhi. Te yajñam eva viṣṇum puraskṛtyeyuh=Devas heard this (that Asuras were about to divide the land) (and said) ‘Come, let us go where the Asuras are dividing (the land); what will become of us if we do not get some portion. (Saying this) they (Devas) went (to the place where Asuras were dividing the land) with Viṣṇu which was Yajña before them.

Mantra IV

Te ho'chu ; anu no' syam prthivyyam abhajat, astveva no'pyasyam bhaga iti. Te hasura suyanta ivocuh, yavad evaiṣa viṣṇurabhiseta tavad vo dadma iti. They (Devas) (went and) said ‘let us also enjoy this land’, ‘let us also have some portion’. The Asuras though rather jealous, said ‘we shall give you the land where this Viṣṇu extends’

Mantra V

Vamano ha viṣṇurasa. Tad deva na jhādīre; mahad vai no'durye (mahad vai nah aduh yz) nah yajñasammitam aduriti (aduh iti.) Viṣṇu was small (the area where Viṣṇu cult prevailed was small). Devas did not despise (the offer), (but accepted saying) ‘you have given us enough when you have given the land where the Yajña extends’.

Mantra VI

Te praṇīcam viṣṇu nipadya chandobhirabhitah paryagrīṣṇān, Gayatrena tva chandasa parigrīṣṇāmi iti daksinātā traīṣṇubhenatā chandasa parigrīṣṇāmi iti paścat, jagatena tva chandasa parigrīṣṇāmi iti uttaratah. They (Devas) placing Viṣṇu towards the east, i.e., extending their religion to the east, began to occupy the areas on the south, west and north with mantras (began to propagate their religion in all directions).

Mantra VII

Tam chandobhirabhitah parigrīṣṇā agnim purastat samadhaya tenarcantah śramyantaśceruh. Tenemam sarvam prthivīm samavindant Etaya hīmam sarvam samavindanta. Evam ha va imam sarvam sapatnanam samvṛṇkte, narbhajatyasyai sapatnan ya evametad veda. Occupying the areas with mantras and establishing fire and worshipping it they went about toiling. Thus they acquired all the land. In this manner they acquired everything from their rivals making them landless.

EDUCATION OF ADIBASIS

HILDA RAJ

The Government of India have taken up in right earnest the duty of educating the 25 million Adibasis of the country, with the object of helping them to become absorbed in the larger Indian society. This is a very difficult but a very necessary task. The difficulty is partly due to the differences in the cultural levels of the various tribes, and partly due to the intra-tribal social solidarity which can be an obstacle to the integration of the Adibasis with the Indian society. The Adibasis cannot therefore be expected to rise to the full stature of citizenship immediately. Neither would any large-scale and sweeping legislation bring about the desired end. It can be done only by a gradual process of adjustment for which a suitable type of education has to be planned and carried out.

The aim of this education should be to help the Adibasis to become responsible citizens of this country. For this purpose it is necessary to awaken in them a consciousness of and an interest in the people in the rest of the country who now stand outside their own society, and are regarded by them as aliens. They need to be helped to realize that their own social group is but a part of the larger group towards whose well-being also they have something to contribute. This realization would lead to their identifying themselves with the people of the Indian Union and to a desire to practise their civic rights for the sharing of responsibilities and privileges.

The method for carrying out the above offers a choice between :

(a) Large-scale and uniform application of the system of education that prevails generally in the country at present ; or

(b) Special methods devised to cover a certain period of time and suitable to the local conditions and to the level of development already achieved.

The first alternative is not suitable to the Adibasis for the following main reasons :

(i) The Adibasis have had a long period of cultural continuity or development, some groups not influenced or but little by any outside forces. In many ways they are differentiated from their fellow-Indians by peculiar cultural traits. They have a rich heritage of songs, proverbs, folklore, dances, material culture, and, in some cases, special skills which deserve to be encouraged and preserved.

(ii) The Adibasis have evolved a system of governing their society by means of tribal customs which apply to every part of life. In spite of disintegrating forces some of these customs handed down from their forefathers are still religiously followed, and they have all

the binding force of laws known to civilized countries. Any system of education which willingly or unwillingly suddenly loosens the sanctions behind the old tribal customs by introducing the Adibasis to a set of values prevalent among their "more advanced" fellow-Indians may lead to the breaking down of their moral life, and their well-being will be harmed.

(iii) Among the Adibasis, as a general rule, men, women, boys, girls and younger children fall into well-defined groups which are made to conform to different codes of behaviour by a complicated system of ceremonies, taboos, etc. These codes of behaviour are further reinforced by the basic idea common to practically all primitive tribes that whatever upholds and promotes the well-being of their social group is "right", while whatever injures the social group is "wrong".

It is thus obvious that the desired enlightenment of the Adibasis can only be brought about through a sympathetic understanding of their special problems and by the introduction of a carefully graduated system of teaching based on the cultural life of each tribe. In particular the initial stages will have to be closely related to the life and environment familiar to them. The main features of the system of education may be on the lines indicated in the succeeding paragraphs.

It is essential in the first place to assess the cultural development of the different groups or tribes and to grade them. The tribes range from people of low cultural levels like the Pulayans and Paliyans in the south, to the more developed Nagas in the east, and the Gonds in Madhya Pradesh. A preliminary investigation should, therefore, be carried out in order to find out the extent of the current vocabulary of each group and to note the peculiarities of the dialect or language in use. Some of the people, especially the men who have contacts with the outer world, may be even bilingual, or their speech more "refined" than that of the womenfolk, and their vocabulary more extensive.

The most important point to remember is that during the preliminary investigation and thereafter only a friendly, sympathetic and appreciative approach will bring about success to all educative measures that may be undertaken. Educationists should be on a goodwill mission throughout, not hoping to win the co-operation of the Adibasis by tempting them with cheap attractive material goods, or by using official authority in any manner of threat or intimidation, or trying to show off their superiority of mind and culture. Respect for the Adibasi's culture and way of life must be not only maintained on the part of the "Teachers", but it must be sincerely felt, however trying at times may be the customs, superstitions and conservatism of the locality. What the "civilized" man of the world may

deem to be "blind" and "stupid" in the Adibasi's life will become intelligible and meaningful to one who carries patience, sympathy and understanding to the service of these people.

After the preliminary investigation is complete, a tentative scheme of education for each tribe may be evolved on the following lines :—

Stages of the Educative Process :

Stage I : Rousing of intellectual curiosity in the Adibasis' own culture. For this their songs and folk-tales should be recorded and played back to them. Sometimes this might serve as an inspiration to the people to make up new songs and stories or to recollect forgotten ones.

Stage II : The above recordings should be written down in the script of the regional language or in the script of the language nearest to their speech. Hindi should come after stage VII if the regional language is not already Hindi. The written matter should be read out so that the interest to know their own "literature" is roused, and the desire to read for themselves is created. At this stage graded simple booklets full of picture should be ready, and the actual teaching begun. This is the time to begin *Reading* and then *Writing* the material being based on the existing vocabulary.

The matter for the booklets should be familiar objects : house, objects in the house, food, members of the family, clothes, implements, animals, trees, birds.

Stage III : More recordings of the people's attitude to their environment e.g., Nature, neighbours, customs, village and social life. This will bring out some of their "ideas". This material is necessary to serve as basis for bringing in outside interests. Booklets containing short simple accounts or observations of nature—trees, clouds, rain, lightning, sun, moon, stars, more about animals, birds, insects etc. Progressive reading and writing.

At this stage short talks illustrated with lantern slides could be used to show scenes not familiar—other peoples, their houses, clothes etc., and their way of life.

Stage IV : Easy booklets containing their own stories and stories of other people and amply illustrated (also lantern slides). More reading and writing. Beginning of arithmetic-figures should first be illustrated with familiar objects—stones, seeds, beads—and simple sums based on everyday transactions and related to local occupations. *No mental arithmetic.*

Stage V : Booklets and slides illustrative of other people, other occupations, other environments, subjects being men, women, children, houses, animals, clothes, ornaments, decoration etc.

Stage VI : Reading of their own tribal history which has been recorded for the purpose and short histories of other peoples. Books of myths, their own and others. Books on realities : birth, marriage, death. Simple geography to introduce the earth and some idea of its dimensions.

Stage VII : Books to introduce—physiology and natural science.

During all these stages no criticism, direct or indirect should be made of the Adibasis' way of life, and at no time should it be brought into discredit. When the desire for knowledge is stimulated they will begin to think for themselves and know what will benefit their society without losing whatever is valuable in it.

After stage VII their standard will be comparable to that of the middle school, and with that much foundation further knowledge can be imparted without any "special" methods.

TRAINING OF TEACHERS

It must be borne in mind that the success of any special type of education for the Adibasis depends on the competence and sense of vocation of the teachers. The problem is comparable to that of child education or adult education, which also require specialized training. Similarly the would-be teacher of the Adibasis must have some idea of the approach of Anthropology to the social problems of primitive tribes. It would also be desirable and necessary to provide him with an objective knowledge of the tribal people among whom he will be working, through the medium of books and articles on the tribe written by Anthropologists, Government officials and Missionaries. For this purpose, "Anthropology, with special reference to the education of tribal people" may be introduced as an optional subject in the curriculum of teachers' training institutions. For graduate teachers, the existing Departments of Anthropology in Indian Universities could perhaps provide specialized short courses of training on these lines. At a later stage, selected teachers may also be sent abroad to study the system of teaching in vogue in U.S.A. and Australia in respect of the aboriginal tribes in those countries.

To sum up, the main points of this article are:

- (a) The Adibasis of India require a special type of education.
- (b) This education should be imparted in graduated stages, which are carefully related to their environment and mental make-up, after which they can be brought on to the general middle school system.
- (c) There should be special courses of training for teachers engaged in Adibasi education.

EDUCATION OF TRIBAL INDIA

T. N. MADAN

These days there is to be seen, all around, a tendency to over-emphasize the role of education, meaning literacy thereby, in tribal rehabilitation. This is the result of a wrong interpretation of the term 'education'. Education, wrongly understood as ability to read and write has been given the top place in many plans drawn up in our country. A similar tendency was witnessed at the deliberation of the Govt. of India conference on Tribal Areas held in June last. It must be clearly understood that education means "bringing up of the young, or systematic instruction" (O.E.D.). More than learning to read and write, and attending a school, it means preparation for life to be lived as a member of the society to which one belongs. And it needs hardly be said that no human group, however primitive, is without its own modes and techniques of education. The usefulness of giving top priority to literacy everywhere, therefore, appears to be doubtful. Literacy is extremely necessary for such tribes as have had long contacts with urban or other 'civilized' groups, and which are in the midst of literate peoples. This holds good of most of the tribal people inhabiting the plains of the central belt. For such tribes as the Nagas, for instance, mass literacy is a thing for the future. By educating them the American missionaries have made the Nagas distrust and disbelieve their own traditions and the past. The hold of these on Nagas in general is, however, strong as yet. The consequence has been that this educated minority is mentally strafed and emotionally torn between two loyalties. So then, it is better to leave them alone. Literacy will have to be given a lower priority, in an all-India scheme for tribal rehabilitation, than socio-economic uplift, medicinal and hygienic facilities, and improved transport and communications.

Once the tribes are economically rehabilitated, the problem of literacy will assume importance. Even at present, as has been already pointed out, all those tribes which are not extremely depressed and are in continuous contact with literate people, must be immediately given the benefits of literacy. It is obvious that the tribal people, now heavily indebted to moneylenders, would not have been so impoverished and exploited if they had an elementary knowledge of the 3 R's. Besides, education through literacy is the best means of scientific propaganda. It is unrivalled both in its appeal and results.

But we have got to be very cautious. Our aim is to rehabilitate the tribes ; and it is quite probable that if due care is not taken we may only succeed in uprooting such people as are made literate, from their socio-cultural milieus. Things taught and the methods of teach-

ing must vary from place to place, and tribe to tribe. Centrally approved and uniform text-books are the best way to make of these simple people exiles at home. The usefulness of science and knowledge and literacy are to be suggested by sincere work by social workers first and Government officials next. No direct attacks on tribal customs and practices are to be allowed. The pupil is to be taught self-esteem first and foremost. He has to be so educated as to make him put facts above myths and science above religion. It has been found that planners often demolish slums in order to move people into better houses ; but the better houses are built later and the slums demolished first. This is actual happening amongst the working classes and supplies an apt and useful analogy. Before we seek to demolish the poor 'habitations' of customs, traditions, beliefs and practices of the tribal people, we must build better 'houses' of knowledge and enlightenment for them ; when that is done we can rest assured that they will themselves give up the old 'habitations' that we want them to leave. Education has to work thus, indirectly.

While planning for the education of tribal India we have to keep certain fundamentals in view which would serve as the *raison d'etre* for our future educational policies. The first of these is that no educational experiment can meet with success if it is tried on a people who are suffering from economic disorganization, or who have such a type of socio-economic structure as does not facilitate educational activity. It has been, for instance, pointed out to us that in Mikir Hills (Assam) there are no permanent villages where schools may be located. We would have to modify such conditions before we can proceed ahead with our plans.

Secondly, the existing modes of education must be studied and utilized. The stress should be always on the familiar and the local.

Thirdly, it is the basic type of education that should be given preference. Schools in tribal areas have no need to be the prototype of the present-day urban schools. Vocational training and cottage industries will have to be a universal feature of tribal schools in India.

Fourthly, there will have to be planning ultimately directed from the centre by a board of educational and administrative specialists. Fixing priorities is an essential feature of all planning. For instance, libraries, advanced engineering courses etc. must not be mixed up with the initial stages of education by magic lantern shows and training in cottage crafts. Local needs will always be the deciding factor. There must be no attempt at a *tour de force*.

Finally, it may be pointed out that our *main* concern should be building the tomorrow with single-mindedness. Some provision

should be made for adult education, but money and efforts will be better spent by tackling the impressionable young.

In order to make literacy digestible, three main things are essential: local teachers, local methods of instruction, and local dialects. Outsiders can never have that sympathy nor that insight which only a local man can possess. But so long as qualified teachers from the local tribal areas are not available, outsiders will have to be sent in. Meanwhile, immediate steps must be taken to train local people as teachers. It has been found that generally the least qualified and the least efficient are assigned to these areas, considering the needs (of these areas) to be simple. This is tragic beyond description. At the primary stage, and that too, in a tribal and backward area, the best brains are required. One would, to use the hyperbole, like the appointment of top educationists and psychologists to do this work. When the student has had a firm and sound foundation, he may be entrusted to less efficient hands. By then he will have learnt to stand on his own legs and think for himself.

The importance of using local methods lies in the easy comprehension and assimilation of things taught made possible by familiarity with these methods.

The question of dialects is a very important one; and that is why there should be no two opinions about it. In all such areas and tribes where a dialect is in existence, it must be used at the primary stage. There are many tribes which have had local dialects in past, but have given them up for some other language, generally the regional language. If the process of assimilating this new language has proceeded far and well, then it should be developed. In case it is undeveloped and the local dialect is not wholly dead, attempts should be made to revive it.

Closely connected with the problem of dialects is the problem of the script to be used. Wherever a local script is in existence it may be used, but it would be much better to adopt the Nagri script universally in tribal India. At the secondary stage, Hindi, written of course in Nagri script, will have to be taught without that the benefits of literacy and education will be lost as the taught will not be able to meet the outsider on an equal and mutually understandable level.

Summing up, we think that educational activities will have to be simultaneous with economic uplift in such areas as are in contact with urban and civilized, or partially civilized, centres. In such areas, however, where the tribes are not in such contact and are economically stable, education should have top priority. But in all such cases where economic disintegration has proceeded far and deep—and the number of such cases is quite large—economic rehabilitation must come first.

This underlying principle of a three-fold approach must be recognized and applied according to the specific conditions of each individual case.

We have to be clear in our conception of the role that education through literacy has to play. It is, of course, one of rehabilitation, of helping tribesmen to live their lives in a fuller, happier, and therefore, better way. We have to recognize culture relativism and allow them to live their life so long as it does not come into sharp conflict with such values as may be held universally and supremely essential. Education, through literacy must needs often mean teaching things taught hitherto, but teaching them better. It will also mean teaching them such new things as will be of help and use to them. Their outlook has got to be changed ; the rest will follow. But dealing with things of intellect is playing with fire. Caution at every step, caution and understanding, are greatly essential. One slight mistake may do irremediable harm to the tribesmen and to those who wish them well. Education through literacy is a very potent medium of instruction, propaganda, and indoctrination ; and it can be used either way. Therein lies the danger, and the consequent need of caution.

RESEARCH NEWS & VIEWS

How anthropological researches can be profitably applied for the study and solution of socio-economic problems in undeveloped or underdeveloped regions has been illustrated by the survey undertaken by the UNESCO in the Marbial Valley (Haiti, West Indies). It is now an acknowledged fact that the standard of living of a community cannot be possibly raised without an intimate knowledge of its culture. Hence, the utility of such surveys and their adoption as preliminaries to social or economic planning by the UNESCO.

This volume (Occasional Papers in Education, No. 10, December 1951) deals with the economic life of the Marbial peasants by the Haitian agronomist, Mr. E. Berronet, and two Social Scientists, Dr. and Mrs. Jean Combaire Sylvain. Detailed descriptions of the geography, crops and agriculture, socio-religious rites connected with agriculture, labour and live-stock, and other subsidiary occupations, are given, and complete statistics on land, family-budgets, indebtedness, illiteracy, occupations, etc., are annexed to enable the planners to gauge the extent of reforms and welfare activities needed in the region.

* * *

Nature, Vol. 168, (December 22, 1951) announces the discovery of the "expected Haemagglutinin, Anti-Fy^b", found in the serum of one Mrs. Hahn of Berlin following the birth of her third child. The abnormal antibody was discovered two days after delivery in the course of the routine examination of all post-natal maternal sera, carried out at the Robert Koch Institute, Berlin.

The gene frequencies involved are such that the discovery would be a most useful one for purposes such as personal identification and the exclusion of disputed paternity.

* * *

At Umm Marawaq in Northern Arabia (along the border of Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom of Jordan) have been discovered certain "interesting buildings on a rock ledge 60 feet high or more from the ground and flanked by wind-eroded mountains". The region is arid and desolate, Arab camel marks or camel drawings are few, yet perched high above the *wadi* frontier are four constructions made with admirable skill and forethought.

In *MAN*, Vol. LII, March, 1952, H. T. Norris has given an illustrated description of these "Rock-Shelter Buildings". Very near the buildings, is also discovered a site "strewn with an abundant flint industry and infrequent shreds of pottery."

"It seems probable" writes the author, "that these constructions are in fact tombs of what is as yet an unknown culture in this part of Arabia, prehistoric or not, but suggesting considerable settlement in what is now almost waterless and deserted wilderness. The lack of written evidence and inscriptions of any kind only emphasizes the remarkable contrast with the abundance of flint industries of every type which strew the desert surface into the north Hejaz, often in groups of small "workshops" in the open desert, which are probably camping sites."

* * *

UNESCO Scheme for Safe Transit of Delicate Scientific Instruments.

The scheme is designed to prevent delicate instruments from being delayed or damaged during customs inspection. The arrangement proposed by UNESCO provides for the inspection of such instruments to be made in the laboratories themselves, under competent supervision, rather than in customs depots at national frontiers or terminals. Each participating Government would name the laboratory or laboratories in its country to which it wished to extend the privileges of the scheme.

The actual procedure might vary from country to country, but UNESCO will keep a register of laboratories designated by governments and would periodically send to interested countries a list of these laboratories, as well as details of operation.

(Current Science, April, 1952).

* * *

The importance of the distribution of *Rh* Blood-groups in relation to transfusion organization has been discussed by R. E. Mourant in a paper published in the 1950 Proceedings of the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF HEMATOLOGY, U.S.A. In populations of non-European origin where Universal donors (Group O) are relatively rare, the problem of blood-transfusion becomes much more intricate than among Europeans and White Americans. "The variations in the frequency of *Rh* negative individuals are even more important than those of Group O individuals from the planning point of view, and it is necessary to consider carefully in any new transfusion service the degree and kind of *Rh* testing service required. The consideration of the *Rh* factor is important from three main viewpoints: (1) the immunization of members of the population as a whole to the *Rh* factor by transfusion. (2) The immunization of mothers and potential mothers by transfusion. (3) The therapy of hemolytic disease of the newborn.

The Geographer (Journal of the Muslim University Geographical Society, Aligarh), Vol. 4, No. 2 has published an article by Dr. Freda Kretschmer-Mookerjee on Migrations in the East.

Corresponding to the successive glaciations and inter-glacials in the temperate latitudes of Eurasia and America, the shifting of the cyclonic storm belt towards the south in the Asian tropics lead to widespread changes in temperature and rainfall, and consequent movements of peoples in the Far East. Scattered in distant geographical regions, many of the ancient or tribal folks retain in their oral literature evidence of cultural similarities. The widely prevalent myth of the Cosmic Waters, or the legend of the scorching of the earth by the sun in the beginning, provide illustrations of cultural diffusion and suggest a history of the movements of peoples who took their myths and folktales with them on their marches and migrations, to the lands where they finally settled.

* * *

A detailed study, based on first-hand investigations, of the *misal*—a structural village group of Punjab (India and Pakistan), is given by Marian W. Smith in a paper published in the AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, Vol. 54, No. 1, January—March, 1952. A structural analysis of Punjabi society reveals a social unit, which is dependent upon social and occupational specialization and which can be closely linked to caste practices; this social unit called *misal* is a characteristic feature of the Punjabi society, unparalleled elsewhere.

Tahsil is the smallest unit of governmental administration in the Punjab, and it rests, in turn, upon this village and *patti* organization which is made use of by the government but is not legally defined or recognized. *Misal* is a grouping of historical importance, and these were unified and militarized by Ranjit Singh to capture the throne of Punjab, thus giving a political tinge to these socio-economically bound groups. After the disintegration of the Sikh Empire, the *misal*, emerged as a "group of villages connected by functional specialization".

"Recognition of the type of social structure to be found in the *misal*," the author concludes, "may well be basic to an understanding of general Indic structure and to a functional analysis of caste."

REVIEWS

"ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION"

BY RAYMOND FIRTH. (pp. 257 ; 18s net) WATTS AND
CO., LONDON (1951).

Although Prof. Firth has written several important books on preliterate life, books like *We, the Tikopia* and *Primitive Polynesian Economy*, yet in India he is better known as the author of that fascinating little volume "Human Types". "Human Types" is representative of Firth's felicitous and lucid style, of his ability to put things in the simplest terms. As compared to it, Firth's latest "Elements of Social Organisation" is strikingly different. The treatment of the subject is on a more abstract level and the subject matter itself is more comprehensive and widespread in space and time. This may perhaps be the result of Firth's widening interests ; it certainly is the outcome of fundamental changes in the scope, method, aims and even the subject-matter of anthropology. This is very rightly pointed out by Firth on the very first page. He says that the most-prized raw material of anthropology, viz., the primitive peoples, is evaporating. This necessitates that there should be a redefinition of the aims of the social anthropologist. And this, according to Firth, should be, a comparative study of human social process, "a reasoned comparative analysis of how people behave in social circumstances". The stress appears to be on the words 'comparative' and 'social'. Such a redefinition of the aims of social anthropology has become necessary not only due to the alteration in the socio-cultural life of the erst-while primitive, as Firth has pointed out, but we feel also because of the widening interests of the anthropologist, and the recognition of applied or practical anthropology as an essential department of this science.

But Firth wants that anthropologists should aim at focussing attention on the "alien elements in human conduct". He is out to discover unity under the diversity that differentiates one society from another.

Talking about the problems that face the investigating anthropologist, the author points out, besides other problems like those which emerge due to either contact or isolation, that anthropology is a science affected by political opinion. Though the social anthropologist himself does not share such opinions but "they enter as factors in the total situation with which the anthropologist is concerned". No amount of emphasis would be exaggerated enough in pointing out the immense danger of this problem inherent in our science. Expert opinion must stand firm and never allow itself to be swayed by mere political opinion.

As far as anthropology succeeds in this difficult task that far will its generalizations and advice carry weight and bear fruit.

The author's suggestion regarding the adoption of the small unit of behaviour as the study unit—"micro-sociology" he calls it—will appeal to all field-workers. Firth's stress on intensive work rather than extensive work is timely and welcome. Here he defends the introduction of abstract reasoning. "Abstraction from the conditions of original observation has involved approximation, *allowing the possible entry of new factors into the situation under examination*". Participation in the life of the people being studied should enable the investigating anthropologist to interpret better and more correctly. Firth warns about vague and airy argumentation. He wants the anthropologist "to secure the greatest degree of abstraction with greatest degree of correspondence with reality". This is ably put. To offset the abstract consideration of social structure, the study of social organization must be "in terms of concrete activity".

The book is divided into two sections. The first section, in the author's words, deals with organization, the other with "the concepts and values in four main fields or aspects of human social activity—economics, art, morals and religion". The first section carries a thought-provoking discussion of the meaning of social anthropology, and an absorbing discussion of social structure and organization, and of social change. It is a happy thing to find social structure being given precise definition, and elucidated with a wealth of examples.

However, many controversial points arise when Firth proceeds to the consideration of concepts and values. His discussion of economic organization particularly will not convince many. His application even though limited, of the principles of classical economic theory to the economic problems of peasant and primitive societies is not very convincing either. The basic concept of economics may everywhere be the allocation of scarce resources but that is not enough to validate the application of classical theory to the ruder forms of economic activity. We agree with the complaint of the neglect of non-western economic forms; and find it difficult to accept the limited role of a watch-dog for the student of such economic systems which are different from the intellectually attractive and the mathematical Western institutional field of economic analysis. A scientist is never ashamed of his subject matter; he should not be. We feel that regional studies in economic analysis offer a very sound solution of the complexity of economic activity. Firth points out how production relationship in the peasant and primitive societies "is often only one facet of a social relationship"; and now out of this emerges a complex distribution system" not easily separated into a classical economist's

scheme of rent, interest, wages, profits". If that is so, then why at all apply the economic theory of the classicists? Writing elsewhere in the book (p. 170) on primitive art, Firth disapproves of the practice of the use of the names given to Western styles of painting in describing primitive art forms and styles. Nobody can deny the validity of this argument; but why should not the same argument apply to the study of economic activity in preliterate societies?

Chapters on primitive art and moral standards are less controversial and interesting. He studies these in so far as they throw some light on social relations which are the concern of a social anthropologist. To him these are important in so far as they help in sustaining or creating social relation. This is a fruitful and meaningful approach and should commend itself to field workers. While discussing symbolism in primitive art, Firth is, however, at his best.

One would have liked such a book to carry a detailed treatment of applied anthropology—something in the form of further development and elucidation of what was said in "Human Types". But that was perhaps beyond the scope of these, the Joshua Mason Lectures delivered at the University of Birmingham.

It is important to note that the science of anthropology has yet to finalize itself. Of course the study of a science knows no end, but the scientist has to be very precise in what his aims are. Anthropology is still evolving and no artificial checks should be put on this development in order to give it final definition. Anthropology has long remained earth-bound and biology-bound. With the coming of people like Kardiner, Linton and others, psychology has come in to aid anthropology. A more intimate relationship with the sociology of values would certainly be welcome; we hope more books and discussion will follow Firth's competent approach and treatment of social organization.

T. N. MADAN

LAND AND LABOUR IN MALABAR

By ADRIAN C. MAYER, PUBLISHED BY GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE,
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS (PP. VIII AND 158); PRICE RS. 7/-

In this little book, Mr. A. C. Mayer attempts an appraisal of Malabar life. His attempt to relate the new to the old at each stage in the evolution of society in Malabar is just the kind of thing which many of us would want to see. But few careful men of his profession will fail to feel inwardly cautious about being carried away somewhat by the subtle charm of Mayer's exposition. The lack of any broad social philosophy, perhaps has prevented the author from understanding cultural legacies of a people hemmed in by 'hills and dales' which

the name Malabar suggests itself. One feels that an anthropologist should have understood clearly the impact of the geographical features on the people that inhabits these hills and dales, for it could also be the best method of understanding the problems and thereby managing the affairs of man who is certainly a part of nature. The difference arising out of greater diversity of human data, their attribute of will and capacity to change deliberately, their non-amenability to experimental control, their non-comparability and halting recurrences, all this require to be drawn into the context of Malabar Culture.

Going through and enjoying every page of 'Land and Labour', one feels that the author's description of the social system in Malabar is not as exciting and exhaustive as it could have been. The chapter on 'Changing patterns' is more descriptive than analytical. The influence of Christianity and Islam should have formed an important subject of study. The large number of conversions from among the lower castes and their ultimate rise in the ladder of society helped to lessen caste rigidity in many respects. Many professional values are dying and new ones are taking their place by force of material factors of change.

The land relations have undergone far deeper changes than what Mr. Mayer has noticed. He has not seen how it came about that in the period in which foreign capitalism opened up Malabar's territory abounding in pepper, cardamon and other valuable spices and carried out its successful imperialist drive all over, the situation in the labour market developed so favourably for the working class composed mainly of the lower castes. There was also great increase in the productivity of labour accompanied by a none too small increase in the living standards of the mass of workers who form the inferior castes. Apart from the evergrowing process of concentration, it was this generation-long rise in real wages which was the decisive factor in determining the social stratification on a higher level cutting criss-cross through caste heirarchy. Tiled houses and clean huts, a pair of bullocks and cows came to be owned by lower castes. This was a new development which cut through many a caste law and custom. This tendency greatly undermined conservation and resistance to change and had important consequences for the later development of the social system in Malabar.

In this period, social reform became the main stream of thought in Malabar which closely combined theory and practice in the great movements like the 'Sahodara Parsthanam' (brotherhood movement), 'the one caste, and one God, one religion for man, movement of Sri Narayana Guru which swayed millions of people throughout Malabar and the Great 'Nambudiri' Yoga Khema Sabha' which very successfully

fought caste and conservation among Brahmins. This period also saw the rise of many caste organizations working for reform and change within every caste and for amalgamation of sub-castes. Within the Nair community, for example, there were 18 main sub-castes among many of which intermarriage and interdining were prohibited. Nair community today has successfully done away with every vestige of this subtle stratification and many other castes have followed suit. This great transformation seems to have escaped the notice of the author. One other important thing which one misses in his book is that of the revolutionary change that has taken place in the caste dress and costume in the last fifty years. Malabar and Travancore Cochin (forming a single linguistic unit) today exhibit a uniformity in national costume irrespective of caste, community or creed so much so, that nobody can recognize one's caste simply by his dress. The matriarchal system of Malabar is fast breaking down for all. The process of transition with its attendant results needs more careful study for understanding the changing patterns of Malabar life than it has received at the hands of the author.

It is, however, to be hoped that when the author returns to the problem at a later stage, he will give somewhat more attention to these problems.

Intellectual sincerity combined with a lovely style makes Mayer's book, a delightful reading.

P. K. GOPALKRISHNAN

DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH ASIA, INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SCIENCE BULLETIN, UNESCO, WINTER 1951, VOL. III, NO. 4.

A useful document for social science specialists is published by the UNESCO in the Winter (1951) issue of the *International Social Science Bulletin* (Quarterly, Vol. III, No. 4). Containing half a dozen original articles on some burning aspects of social life in South Asia, including India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia, it has attempted to explain the manner in which certain social science problems are regarded in Asia by representatives of the different groups of Asiatic culture.

It has been the aim of the *International Social Science Bulletin* to provide original studies, either with some important problem in contemporary social science, or with its application to a particular region. The present issue makes an outstanding contribution to the study of some problems which have engaged the attention of social scientists in Southern Asia.

Dr. Tara Chand, in his study of the impact of Western Civilization on Eastern Ideology and ways of life, comes to the conclusion that Asia even after a long period of Western domination has not abandoned "the insights and certainties which afford anchorage to the human mind tossed in the storms of passion and enveloped in dark clouds which completely obscure the horizon." The path adopted by New India of which Mahatma Gandhi was the pioneer advocate, is an assimilation of East and West, embodying the spiritual values of the Orient, and science, social and political ideals of the West.

Mr. Kewal Motvani has given an analysis of the influences of modern technology on the social structure of south Asia. Mr. Motwani thinks that the spiritual concepts of Asia, and the technical concepts of the West must come together for a happy restoration of social life and human relations.

Prof. D. P. Mukerjee has dealt with the status of women in India, describing how the uneasiness and restlessness felt by them is studied, as also the changes these phenomenon bring about in family structure and values.

Dr. D. N. Majumdar in his paper on Tribal Rehabilitation in India has discussed the problems of the tribal communities in this sub-continent, has given a brief review of welfare activities, and outlined a sympathetic, scientific scheme for the restoration of tribal values and the rehabilitation of the shattered tribal life. Mere economic rehabilitation of the tribes, he points out, won't do; what is needed today is a "total approach" to tribal problems.

The Indian village, which is the basic unit of socio-economic life in India is the subject of Mr. B. K. Madan's article. The decline of traditions and institutions, the repercussions of international trade on the social structure, the role of caste as a barrier to economic mobility and the crisis the Indian village faces today are some of the problems discussed by Mr. Madan.

The rest of the issue is taken up by studies of the agencies for social service, and the publications issued by the United Nations and allied Agencies.

Covering some of the basic cultural problems of South Asia, the document is a useful aid to the Social Scientists in South Asia.

K.S.M.

SOCIOLOGICAL BULLETIN

VOL. I, NO. 1, 1952, INDIAN SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY, BOMBAY,
PRICE RS. 3/- or 4 sh.

We welcome the publication of the *Sociological Bulletin*, quarterly journal of the Indian Sociological Society, Bombay. The need for such a journal was long felt, and its publication is only voicing the desire to accord a distinct status to Indian Sociology, a fact long overdue in view of the queer and varied problems and social situations presented by society in India.

The formation of the Indian Sociological Society with its own journal is thus, an historic event and perhaps also a forecast of the future extension of sociological study in India.

The first issue of the *Bulletin* contains half a dozen articles by eminent sociologists, Indian and foreign. Sociology in the U.S.A. by Prof. W. F. Ogburn details the organization of sociology in the States—the teaching, research, publication and association of sociological studies. Prof. D. P. Mukerji's article on Sociology in Independent India, throws a searching light on the status of sociology and its position as a subject of study in Indian Universities. He has given an analysis of the reasons for the neglect and apathy for sociology in India—both by the Universities and the States and has tried to develop a socio-cultural approach for the interpretation and correct estimation of political communal problems in India. For planners of social education, we have his sane words: "In Indian Universities sociology should be the fundamental subject in all the courses of social studies in the Arts Faculties, and Science, Law, Medical, Technological and Commerce Faculties would do well to arrange lectures on the principles of sociology and social origins, processes and implications of their respective disciplines for their students in order that they may resist the disintegration of knowledge brought about by specialization and reach a whole view of life".

'Social Anthropology and Sociology' by Mr. M. N. Srinivas gives a summary review of the two aspects of the scientific study of society—inductive and deductive—and frames out a case for the teaching of "Comparative Sociology" as outlined by Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard. Prof. G. S. Ghurye's article on Social change in Maharashtra (I) presents the culture-traits in Marathi literature and customs in such a manner as to bring out the social change reflected therein, and the social forces responsible for affecting such changes. Other articles of interest are 'Sociological Trends in Contemporary France' by P. Gispeot, 'Concept of Society—Reconsidered' by K. C. Panchnadikar, and 'The Middle Class' by J. V. Ferreira.

Under the editorship of Prof. Ghurye and colleagues it is hoped that the journal will prove its worth and help in establishing sociology in India on a base of rich traditions and heritage provided by Indian culture.

K. S. M.

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AFRICAN IDEAS OF GOD

By E. W. SMITH AND OTHERS; EDINBURGH HOUSE PRESS,
LONDON; pp. X+308; S 21/-

The Dark Continent has long been a favourite hunting ground for explorers, adventurers, journalists and missionaries and numerous literature dealing with the continent and its people has been published. Of special interest to writers on Africa has been the subject of the religion of the native, the exotic beliefs and the colourful yet horrible (to the European eye!) rituals practised by these legendary folks. Head-hunting, human sacrifice, cannibalism, sensual orgies, superstitions, ghost worship, magic, sorcery and witchcraft attracted the attention of the observers more than any other institution of aboriginal life. The Europeans saw in the primitive religion of Africa a picture very much different from what they knew of religion in the West, heathenism, and a positive breach of Christian ethics and morality. The belief was confirmed that here was a big section of human population which did not believe in God, and which worshipped, instead, ghosts and demons, spirits and godlings of nature, disease and death. They were regarded as "animists", and the church took up as its sacred duty the conversion of these 'pagan' people to the folds of Christianity, by force and persecution, if need be.

But the question has always been puzzling the scholars of culture and religion whether the African aboriginal was as he was portrayed by the Westerners. As late as 1909, Sidney Hartland declared: "The most obscure and difficult question connected with the religion of the Bantu (and he might have added, of Africans in general) is whether they have any belief in a supreme god, a creator, and overruling Providence." Dr. Edwin Smith has ventured a positive answer, an emphatic "yes". He holds that all Africans, even at the lowest wrung of cultural ladder, believe in a High God. The criteria he gives of a High God (as distinct from Cosmic Mana) are that: He has a personality and a personal name, He is a Being who is not human and never in the recollection of men was human; He is anthropomorphic although no images are made of Him; He is Creator, Fashioner

or Constructor, ultimate power and authority behind the world and all life, the judge, and He is worshipped, though rarely. The concept of God as the Supreme Being is present in the minds of the Africans, and their myths, prayers and legends contain evidence to show this.

There are, according to Dr. Smith, three phases or levels of African religion: theism, spiritism, and dynamism. "It would be quite a mistake," he writes "to suppose that Africans place on the same plane of sanctity the High God, the ancestral and other spirits, and the amulets and talismans which figure so largely in their daily life."

The Africans believe that God has appointed his agents (spirits and ghosts) in different places. Each department of nature is supposed to be under the direct control of such an agent, there are hill-spirits, and river gods, and demons of disease, spirits of draught and pest, and so on; the sacrifices and appalling rituals are performed to appease these godlings. They *know* that these agents are not the Supreme Being and they do not worship these as such. Actually, the Supreme Being is regarded as wholly beneficent and good, and they do not associate with Him any harm that comes to them.

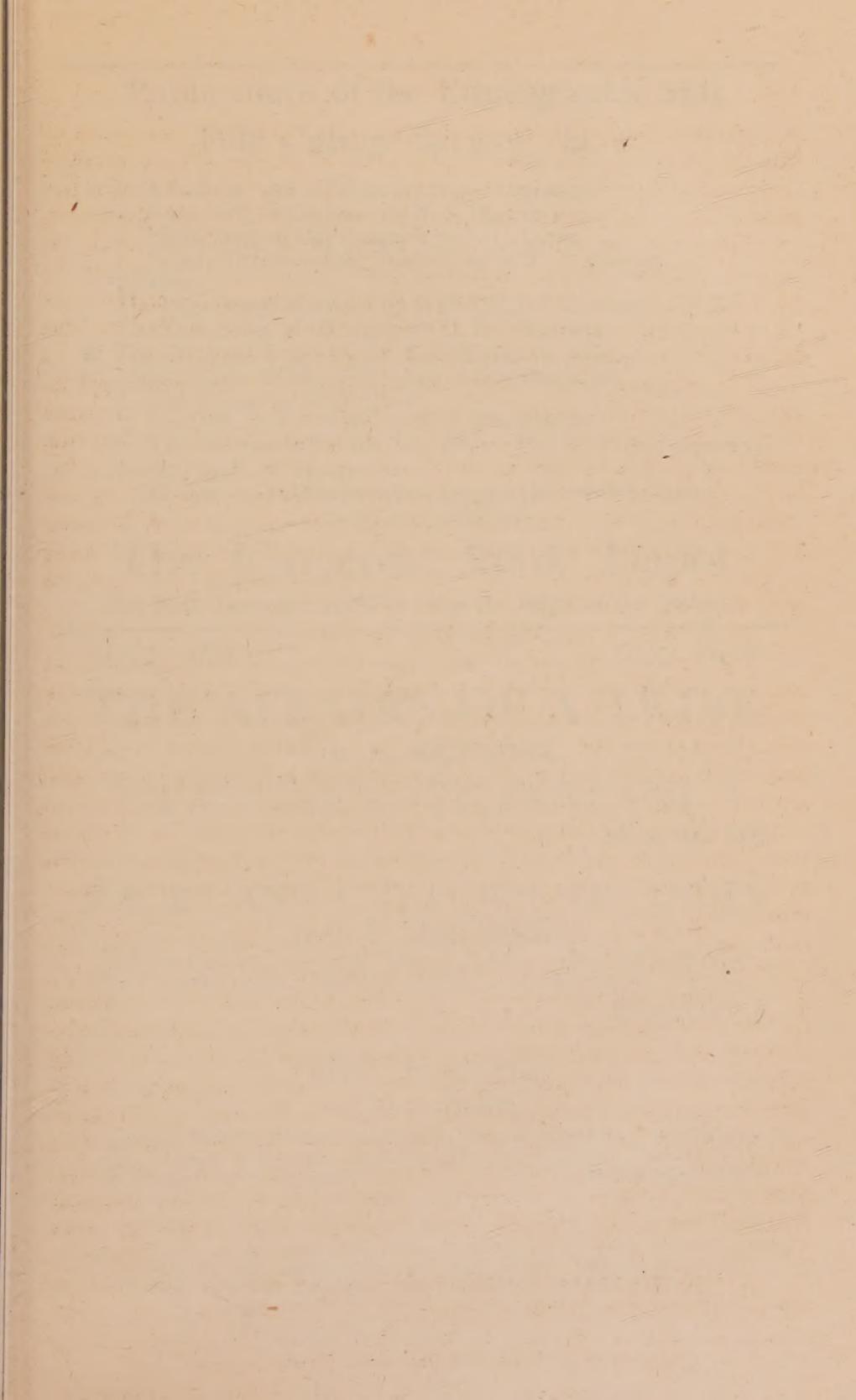
What then is the African idea of God?

The African (like other men) has his fundamental needs, food and sex; but he also has what Ralph Linton calls 'psychic needs' the desire for safety and invulnerability in this hostile world. To meet these needs, he seeks power. To an extent, his needs are satisfied by pseudo-science, dynamism and spiritism; he takes the help of magical powers, ancestors or spirits, ghosts or goblins to fulfil his ends; but there comes a stage, alike in the experience of all individuals and societies, when all these fail him; sooner or later, he reaches the frontier line beyond which neither dynamism nor spiritism can satisfy his needs: they do not meet all the facts, nor adequately solve the problems of life. That is *where God comes in*. He is the ultimate controller of all forces and destinies ; He is the last resort when all helpers fail.

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